■ Business / B1

Globe G-Cash wins best mobile messaging service in Cannes, France

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Palace rejects calls for Misuari's release

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Court grants Marissa Fernandez temporary protection order

■ Across / A17

Davao Oriental gov, son probed for illegal logging

■ INQUIRER IN-DEPTH

Welga sa Hacienda: Ang totoong istorya

Alas-11 ng gabi: Noynoy, CATLU, ULWU, Satur, atbp

Bomb evidence hosed down the drain, say probers

NAANOD ANG EBIDENSYA!

By Margaux C. Ortiz

LIKE WATER, evidence went down the drain.

Police officials yesterday said responding firemen had destroyed valuable evidence in the course of

BOMB/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

SC denies motions of Chiong sisters' convicted killer

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME COURT yesterday denied an appeal of Francisco Juan "Paco" Larrañaga, who was sentenced to death for the rape-murder of the Chiong sisters in Cebu, to have his case heard at the Court of Appeals.

In a two-page resolution dated Jan. 11 but

SC DENIES/ A8

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Thursday, February 17, 2005 ★★ 48 pages 4 sections Vol. 20 No. 71 P18

website: www.inq7.net

RP credit cut 2 notches

Disgusted senators want to ignore Moody's downgrade

By Doris C. Dumlao
Business

WARNING of heightened vulnerability to economic, financial and political shocks due to a damaging buildup of public debt, the US-based Moody's Investor Service cut the sovereign credit ratings of the Philippines by two notches.

Governor Rafael Buenaventura of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said on Monday that Moody's would likely cut the country's sovereign credit rating by one notch.

In stark contrast to Moody's downgrade, Rating and Investment Information (R&I) of Japan reaffirmed its investment grade rating on Philippine long-term and short-term credit.

However, the outlook on long-term credit rating was changed to "negative" from "stable."

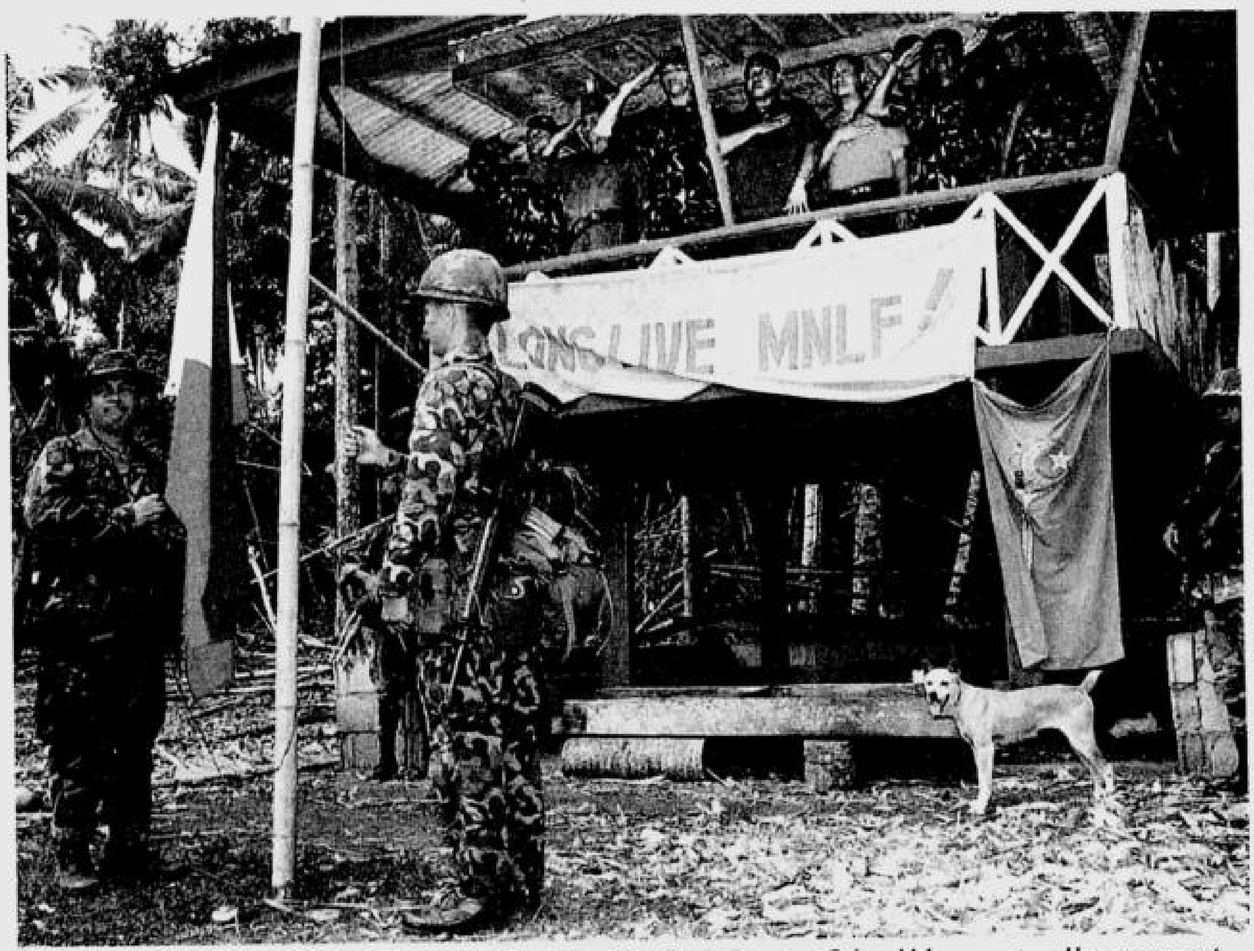
Moody's action was even tougher than the one-notch downgrade by Standard & Poor's last month. The country's debt ratings with Moody's now stand four notches below the much-coveted investment grade.

A credit downgrade increases the cost of the county's borrowings. A single downgrade adds between 1.0 and 1.5 percentage points to the interest charge on government-issued debt, according to BSP estimates. A two-notch cut would be more costly.

The Philippines, Asia's most active sovereign issuer outside of Japan, issued $1.5 billion of bonds in January as part of a plan to raise $4 billion in the overseas debt market this year to help plug a fiscal gap.

The peso dived to 55.05 to the dollar and stock prices gave up hefty early gains moments after Moody's announced it had cut the country's long-term foreign- and local-currency ratings.

RP CREDIT/ A8


LONG LIVE MNLF !

RP FLAG goes up at the abandoned headquarters of the Misuari loyalists in Panamao, Sulu, which was captured by government troops on Tuesday. Military officials led by Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza (3rd from left on stage) salute the flag. The camp was renamed after their fallen comrade, Lt. Col. Dennis Villanueva, in the battle in Jolo.

AFP

Reduced rating quite severe, Palace deplores

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

TOO HARSH and largely undeserved.

These were the reactions of government officials and money managers to Moody's Investor Services' two-notch downgrade of the country's credit rating.

"We believe Moody's decision is quite severe but we take this as a challenge to pursue reforms with a greater sense of urgency," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye cited a recent report by Japan's credit rating agency, Research and Investment Information Inc., which reaffirmed the country's investment grade status although it changed its outlook from stable to negative.

"The two-notch downgrade is both unexpected and unwarranted. Moody's may be operating on outdated perceptions," said Ramon del Rosario Jr., chair of the Philippine-US Business Council.

Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said Moody's did not consider the changes over the past few months such as the emerging "common political will" of the executive and legislative branches to draft unpopular revenue measures and President Macapagal-Arroyo's resolve in cutting expenditures and keeping the budget within target.

Purisima said "the market has priced (Moody's action) in." He expressed the

REDUCED/ A8

Gov't troops capture rebel camp

By Julie S. Alipala
PDI Mindanao Bureau

PANAMAO, Sulu—The military formally declared victory over followers of jailed Moro leader Nur Misuari by raising the Philippine flag inside an abandoned encampment in Barangay Bitanag here yesterday morning.

The place was renamed Camp Dennis Villanueva in honor of the fallen commander of the 53rd Infantry Battalion, the main unit that figured in more than one week of fighting with Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) renegades backed by Abu Sayyaf members.

Seventy-one people, 31 of them soldiers, have died in the clashes. More than 22,000 villagers have been displaced.

Villanueva, 42, a lieutenant colonel, was buried with full military honors yesterday at the Libingan ng mga Bayani in Makati City. He will be posthumously

GOV'T TROOPS/ A6

ng tirahan at
mag-aaruga.
sa isang payapa

"MOTHER TERESA OF THE PHILIPPINES." Father Pierre Tritz tells stories to former scavengers in Smoky Mountain who are now beneficiaries of the Educational Research and Development Assistance, which he founded to save and serve the city's underprivileged youth.

ROMEO GACAD/AFP

90-year-old priest saves street kids thru education

IT'S 10 a.m. and Father Pierre Tritz has been up now for the best part of four hours. Dressed in a neatly pressed white barong with a silver cross attached to the collar, he sits behind an old desk listening intently to a foreign aid worker, hands locked together under his chin as if in prayer.

Every now and then he leans forward, whispers something, smiles and leans back into his chair. The aid worker makes a note in her notebook.

Phones in the cramped office of this former convent in Quezon City ring constantly. "Probably someone wanting to give us a lot of money," the 90-year-old Jesuit says, turning to the aid worker with a wink and a wry smile.

Beyond the iron gates of the compound, some 300 squatter families live in overcrowded hovels, renting rooms from avaricious squatter landlords. In the street, naked youngsters

90-YEAR-OLD/ A22

House rushing antiterror measure

By Cynthia D. Balana and Christine O. Avendano

THE HOUSE of Representatives is rushing the passage of an antiterror bill that provides stiffer penalties for terrorism and allows wiretapping of suspects' homes as a response to the armed conflict in Sulu and the Valentine's Day bomb attacks in the cities of Makati, General Santos and Davao.

Maguindanao Rep. Simeon Datumanong, chair of the House committee on justice, said it was working on the report on the public hearings conducted on the bill. He said he expected the report to be completed and signed next month, after which it would be submitted to the committee on rules for scheduling for plenary deliberations.

"The committee takes note that this is a badly needed measure, but we'll have to observe due process," said Datumanong, a former justice secretary.

He said certain contentious issues in the report had yet to be ironed out, including the fear that the use of electronic surveillance could constitute invasion of privacy.

Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan, author of House Bill No. 2639 that seeks to define terrorism and provides stiffer penal-

HOUSE/ A6

AUSTRALIAN federal police investigators are helping local authorities in the investigation of the coordinated Valentine's Day bombings in Makati, General Santos and Davao. On Wednesday, they inspect the impact of the bomb on the area. surrounding the crime scene.

AP

DOJ to Gringo: Answer coup raps

By Philip c. Tubeza

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice has ordered former Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan to finally answer the charge of coup d'etat against him for his alleged participation in the Oakwood mutiny in July 2003.

Coup d'etat is a nonbailable offense and carries a maximum penalty of 40 years' imprisonment.

Ironically, the crime was included in the Revised Penal Code after the 1989 coup attempt that Honasan led against the Aquino administration.

The DOJ panel of prosecutors on Tuesday issued a subpoena against Honasan and ordered him to appear before a hearing at 2 p.m. on Feb. 28 at the DOJ.

The panel ordered Honasan and two of his co-accused, Navy Capt. Felix Turingan and one Lina Reyes, to submit their counter-affidavits and supporting evidence in their defense.

The panel issued the subpoena against Honasan after the Supreme Court in July 2004 ruled that the DOJ had jurisdiction over the case.

Besides Honasan, Turingan and Reyes, the other respondents are Honasan's staff

DOJ TO GRINGO/ A22

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/17/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONT PAGE

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Palace won't release Misuari

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.
and Philip C. Tubeza

MALACAÑANG yesterday rejected calls for the release of jailed Muslim rebel leader Nur Misuari, saying it would be tantamount to giving up the fight against insurgency.

But Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said President Macapagal-Arroyo was open to a proposal to declare a state of emergency to address fears of more terrorist attacks after the Valentine's Day bombings in Makati and the cities of Davao and Gen. Santos in Mindanao.

"That proposal is tantamount to surrender. We all know that Mr. Misuari is in jail because he is facing charges. What is important is to rush the hearings on these charges," said Bunye in an interview with RMN radio.

Bunye said that Misuari should only be allowed to go free if he is proven innocent of the rebellion charges against him.

Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte the other day proposed releasing Misuari, who is detained at Fort Sto. Domingo in Laguna, to help defuse the bloody clashes in Jolo, Sulu between the military and his Moro National Liberation Front loyalists.

More trouble

Setting Misauri loose would only cause more trouble, said Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

"If he is inside and he is still causing this much trouble, what more if he is freed?" he said.

Gonzalez said he also has reservations about giving the President emergency powers to put down the rebellion in Sulu and prevent a repeat of the deadly Valentine's Day bombings.

While he could defend the grant of emergency powers to the President legally, Gonzalez said it would be opposed by various sectors.

He also did not agree with Rep. Satur Ocampo's suggestion that Misuari appear before the House of Representatives in an inquiry into the Sulu clashes because bringing the Moro leader to Congress from his place of detention would entail serious security risks.

He suggested that the House hold hearings instead in the makeshift courtroom that had been set up in Fort Sto. Domingo for Misuari's rebellion hearings.

Misuari was charged with rebellion after he led his supporters in an attack military outposts and a police station in Sulu in November 2001 to stop the elections for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The uprising, which lasted for days, left more than 100 people dead. Misuari fled to Malaysia where authorities arrested and detained for breaking Malaysian immigration laws. He was deported and returned to Manila in January 2002.

Bunye said the President would convene the National Security Council to consult her advisers before making a final decision on Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr.'s proposal to put some parts of the country under a state of emergency.

"We have to weigh things carefully," Bunye said.

In the meantime, the Palace was satisfied with the heightened alert status of all military and police personnel, he said.

"Our main focus now is to ensure strict and sustained implementation of security measures and this is now being done round the clock," he said.

Malacañang is also supporting moves to fast-track the approval of the anti-terrorism bill. *(See story on Page A1)*

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales said Malacañang was drafting a "more comprehensive" version of the antiterrorism bill to make it more effective in deterring terrorist acts.

Gonzalez dismissed allegations that the government was delaying the case against Misuari, saying that it had presented witnesses and was "ready to prosecute."

The judge hearing Misuari's rebellion case has opted for early retirement and the Supreme Court has been asked to appoint a replacement, he said.

Gonzalez said it was Misuari's lawyers who were causing the delay by asking for a lot of postponements on various technicalities.

He also said he had no objection to transferring Misuari from Fort Sto. Domingo to another detention camp after various Muslim groups claimed that Misuari was "sickly."

"If they will petition and a doctor says he is ill, I will have no problem with that. If we allowed Erap [detained ex-President Estrada] to go to Hong Kong, I do not see any problem with that," Gonzalez said. *With a report from Cynthia D. Balana*

FAREWELL TO ARMS

Family, friends and comrades-in-arms of Lt. Col. Dennis Villanueva give their final farewell to the fallen Army officer before he was buried yesterday at the Libingan ng mga Bayani.

ERIK ARAZAS

Ebdane warned of DPWH syndicate

THE NEW Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. cannot succeed in reforming the Department of Public Works and Highways for as long as the "syndicate of corrupt officials" remains in the agency, a department official said yesterday.

Danilo Manalang, director of the DPWH's project management office, warned that Ebdane could face the same fate as his predecessor Florante Soriquez because the syndicate "would surely not allow him (Ebdane) to stay for long if he, like his predecessor, interfered in their anomalous transactions."

In a press conference yesterday, Manalang named Assistant Secretary Raul Asis as one of the alleged masterminds of the "web of corruption" in the department.

He said that other high-ranking DPWH officials were also members of the syndicate.

Asis was the leader of a group of key DPWH officials who petitioned the President to remove Soriquez as secretary. Soriquez, who was sacked last week, agreed to slide down to undersecretary.

Manalang claimed the syndicate was making money from manipulating the quality control mechanisms of multimillion-peso public works projects. He said the syndicate's leaders had placed "stooges" in the main DPWH offices to cover their tracks.

The syndicate moved against Soriquez, who was sacked last week, because its schemes were about to be exposed and its members unmasked by the reforms that Soriquez had started, Manalang claimed.

Asis shrugged off Manalang's charges and told reporters that the "whole department" would not have supported his move against Soriquez if he had not been telling the truth.

He said Manalang's allegations were an "old story" and could be expected of Manalang who he said was from the Soriquez camp.

"We got what we wished for, because we have a new Secretary. If Manalang wants, he can submit his allegations to Ebdane and let the latter conduct an investigation," Asis said.

Asis said his integrity had been proven when Soriquez appointed him chair of the DPWH's Integrity Board, which is responsible for investigating complaints against DPWH officials and employees as well as public works contractors. *Jerome Aning*

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Defensor in Senate dock on illegal logging, mining

SENATE Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel has asked the Senate to convert itself into a committee of the whole next week to grill Environment Secretary Michael Defensor on why illegal logging and mining activities continue unabated in certain areas of the country.

Pimentel filed Senate Resolution 186 asking the Senate to summon Defensor to answer questions on what steps the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have undertaken to effectively enforce the country's forest protection laws.

The resolution, which was set to be approved by the plenary last night, asked Defensor to appear before the committee of the whole at 3 p.m. on Feb. 23.

Pimentel said that although Defensor was a known "favorite" of President Macapagal-Arroyo, he expected administration senators to cross party lines and support his resolution.

According to the opposition senator, Defensor will be asked to shed light on reports about continued logging operations and transport of logs and timber outside of forest areas in defiance of the total ban on commercial logging that the President imposed following the killer flash floods and landslides in Aurora and Quezon provinces late last year.

Pimentel noted that long before the disasters in Aurora and Quezon, concerned citizen's groups and non-government organizations had been making urgent appeals to Malacañang and the DENR to stop all logging operations in these two provinces' endangered forests.

But he said these appeals went unheeded by the authorities, including Defensor.

Recently Defensor and another opposition senator, Jamby Madrigal, feuded over the DENR's logging policy.

The tiff was exacerbated when Defensor implied that the Madrigal clan had been engaged in illegal logging in Aurora and Quezon. He later retracted his statements, but refused to apologize to Madrigal who then sued him for libel.

During deliberations on the DENR's 2005 budget last week, Madrigal raised 250 questions on the alleged inefficiency and incompetence of the DENR, only agreeing to cut short the budgetary debate in favor of a full-blown question hour to be set at a later date.

Pimentel said Defensor would also be asked on the complaints about the DENR's indiscriminate issuance of logging permits in the forms of integrated forest management agreements and product-sharing agreements even before he took over at the department. *Michael Lim Ubac*

DBM passes buck on 'love bonus'

By Norman Bordadora

IF YOU'RE a public servant and you've yet to receive President Macapagal-Arroyo's "love" bonus, you might have to blame the government agency you belong to.

The Department of Budget and Management yesterday said the government had not reneged on its promise to give the productivity enhancement pay or the President's much touted Valentine's Day gift for government employees this February.

Acting Budget Secretary Mario Relampagos said the delay in the distribution of the Valentine's Day bonus of as much as P3,000 may be attributed to the failure by some government agencies to comply with the DBM requirements such as reports and certifications on the agencies' gross and net savings as of Dec. 31, 2004.

The DBM also required a certification that no extra cash gift or additional benefit other than year-end benefits were given to employees in 2004.

"It is a pity their employees have to suffer for lack of compliance. We are just following rules and we cannot release to them their requirement for the PEP unless they submit to us the required reports as these are the bases of how much funds are to be released to an agency," Relampagos said.

Relampagos, however, said some government agencies had received money for PEP.

"There are government employees who received their PEP on Feb. 15. There may be a slight delay in the release of the PEP but we are assuring all government employees that they will receive their PEP, or the love bonus, within the week," Relampagos said.

Relampagos said the DBM had done its part of the bargain when it released the cash requirement to the agencies.

"It all now depends on how fast government agencies can process the payroll for the PEP so their employees can receive it before the week ends. It is not actually a long wait," he said.

The Confederation for the Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Agencies on Feb. 15 raised a howl over the delay of the Valentine's Day cash gift, which the group said should have been given as early as Feb. 14.

Courage, an umbrella organization of government employees' unions, questioned the government's sincerity in uplifting the economic welfare of public servants because of the delay in the highly publicized cash gift.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Corrupt officials face forfeiture of ill-gotten wealth in favor of gov't

By Nikko Dizon

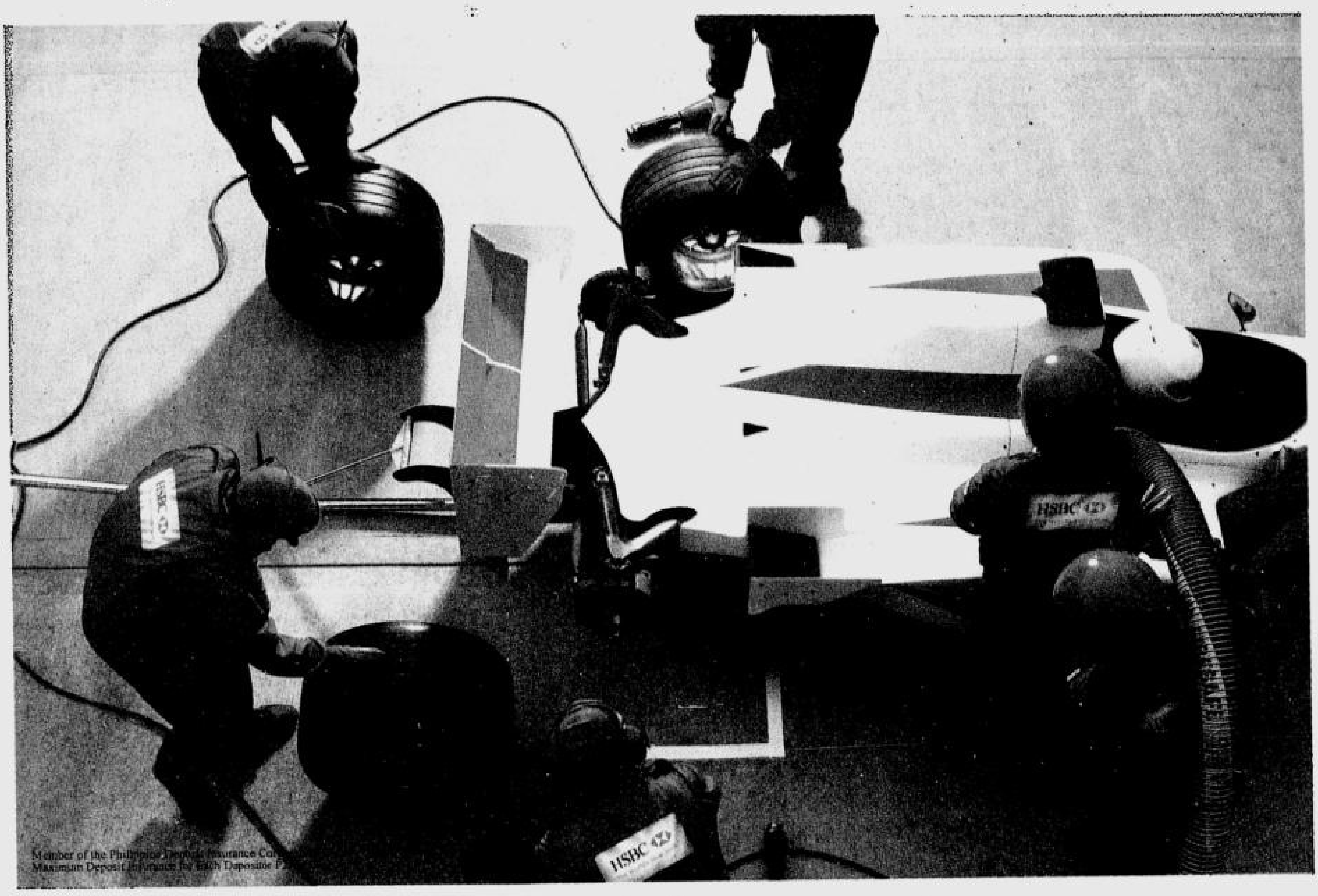
PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday that public officials who will be charged with corruption will also find their stolen wealth forfeited in favor of the government.

Ms Arroyo made the announcement in a speech delivered at the presentation of the Millennium Project report of the United Nations at the Hotel Dusit Nikko in Makati City.

"More government officials are being charged with corruption. Soon, they will not only be charged, they will have their ill-gotten gains forfeited to the government. That is my next instruction to our anticorruption officials," the President said.

Some government officials, most recently the deputy commissioner of the Bureau of Customs, have been suspended or dismissed for failing the administration's lifestyle check.

The President said her administration's continued campaign against corruption is part of her 10-point pro-poor legacy agenda that aims to help achieve the UN's development goals.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ENRILE

Annulment of Enrile's US visa probably 'a mistake'

By TJ Burgonio

BELIEVING it could be a mistake, Ambassador Francis Ricciardone has made "strong representations" with the US government to restore Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile's canceled visa, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said yesterday.

"He said that it was probably a mistake. That's why he made strong representations that that's an error, and therefore, it should be rectified," Romulo said, recalling his conversation with Ricciardone over the opposition senator's canceled visa.

"He had made strong representations with the US that ... if there was a mistake in the supposed cancellation, the visa of Senator Enrile should be restored," he added in a press briefing.

Romulo, himself a former senator, said he had also instructed the embassy in Washington, D.C. "to follow up on the rectification."

"If it's a mistake it can happen to anyone, including myself," he said.

When asked about the grounds for the cancellation, he said: "I wouldn't speculate on the reasons, but he (Ricciardone) told me ... that it should be rectified."

Enrile wondered why his multiple-entry US visa, valid for another five years, was canceled last month, saying he has "not violated any US law."

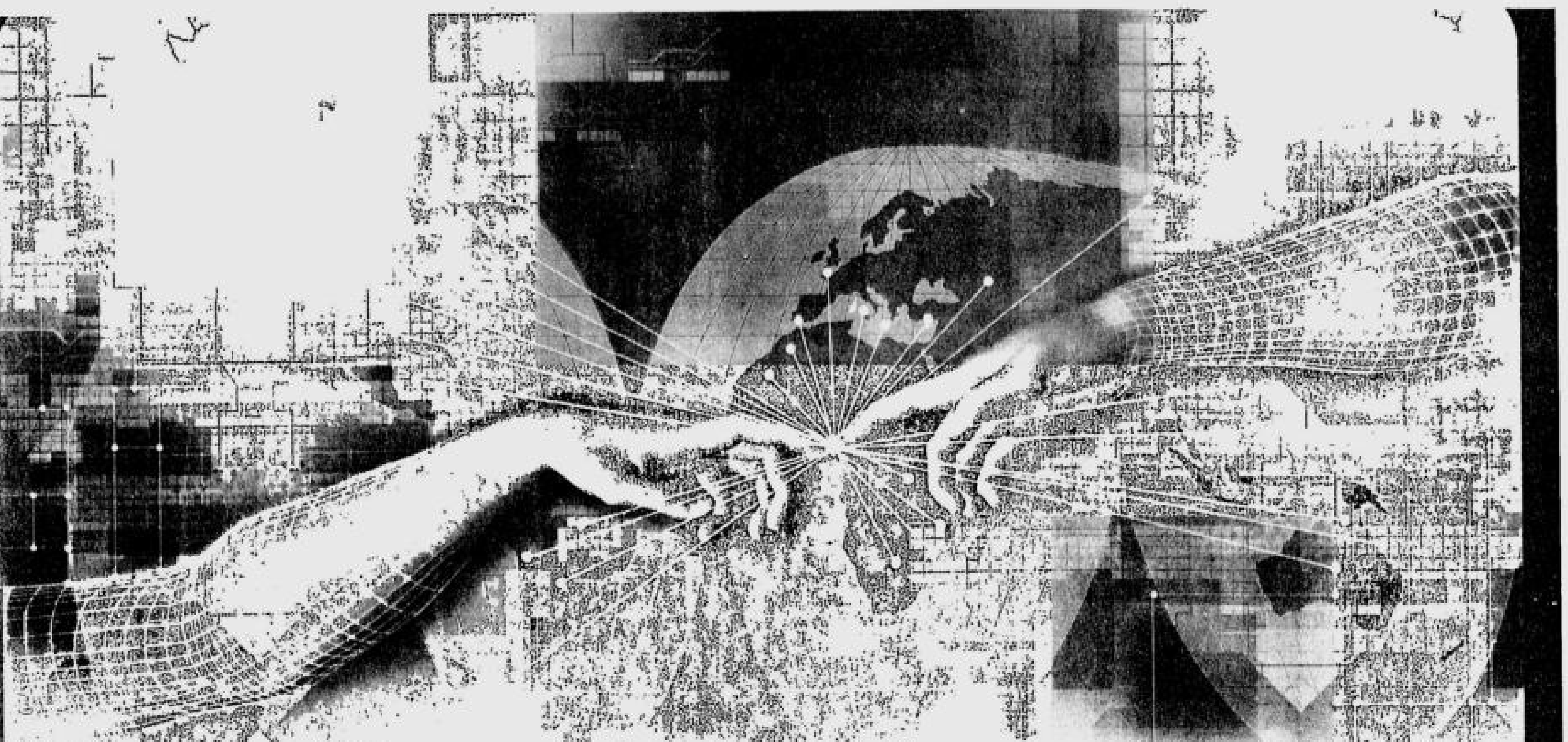
"I have no record of involvement or participation in any criminal activity in the US," he said, but voiced the belief that the cancellation could be an offshoot of his reported involvement in a failed coup in the '80s during the Aquino administration.

Enrile had been linked to several destabilization plots against the government during the term of President Corazon Aquino from 1986 to 1992.

The senator said he had been told by US Embassy officials not to travel to the United States either on official business as a member of the Senate or as a tourist "to avoid any embarrassment" upon arrival at the US port of entry.

He, however, said that he could apply for a new visa if he decided to visit his two grandchildren, who are American citizens.

"Now if I want to go, I will have to apply for a visa. It's really up to them to decide whether I should be issued a new one or not," he said.



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9:30 am	The New Competitive Reality
10:10 am	Global Outsourcing Trends
10:50 am	Global Outsourcing: Marketing Opportunities & Challenges
11:30 am	Open Forum
12:00 nn	Lunch
1:30 pm	Emerging Technology for Global Competitiveness
2:00 pm	Keynote Address: "Brand PHILIPPINES"
2:30 pm	Coffee Break
2:45 pm	Panel discussion on "Brand PHILIPPINES"
3:35	Discussion Synthesis
Day 2	Sectoral Tracks
8:00 am - 12:00 nn	Security and Privacy, Isla Ballroom 2 Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), Boracay 1 & 2
8:00 am - 5:00 pm	Animation, Isla Ballroom 3
2:00 pm - 5:30 pm	Software Development, Isla Ballroom 2 Data Transcription, Boracay 1 & 2
8:00 am - 12:00 nn	Engineering Design and Services, Batanes 1

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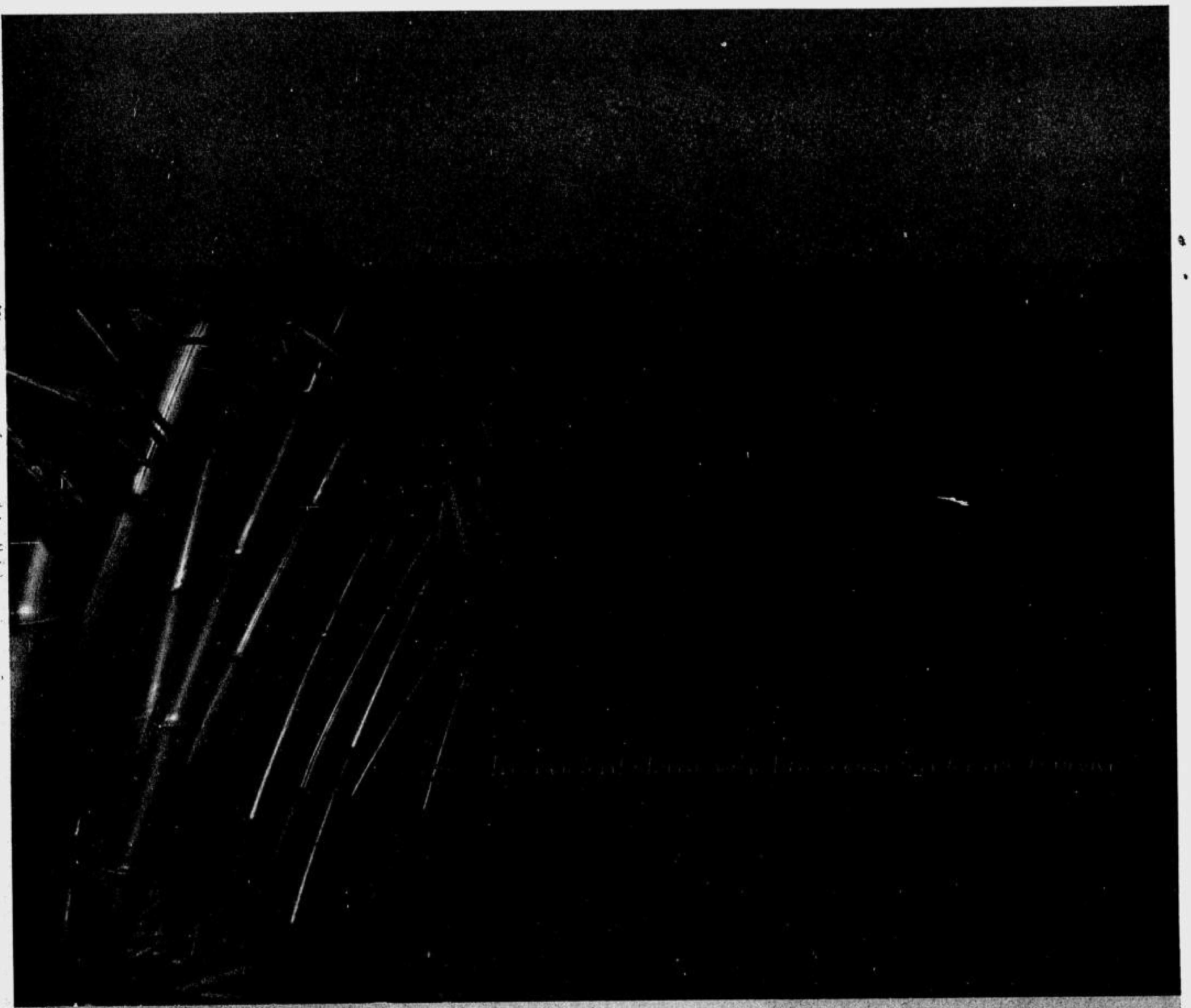

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Gov't troops capture rebel camp

From page A1

awarded with a Distinguished Conduct Star, the Armed Forces' second highest honor.

Brig. Gen. Agustin Dema-ala, chief of the Task Force Comet, said the "camp" was overrun Tuesday afternoon after sporadic clashes.

Blood stains, bunkers

Inside the 2,000-sq.-m compound is a cluster of eight houses, two wooden watch towers, underground bomb shelters, a parade ground and two "bunkers." Surrounding it is a bamboo fence held steady by clotheslines.

Dema-ala said one of the bunkers could accommodate up to 10 people.

One of the houses belonged to Ustadz Habier Malik, the rebel group's leader, who was reportedly wounded in a clash but was not captured. It has a large room believed to have served as meeting place.

Posters of Misuari from his heydays as MNLF chair and governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao are tacked on the walls.

In the other houses, children's and women's clothes were scattered alongside combat uniforms. Blood stains were everywhere, but there was no sight of Malik's group, only three heads of cattle resting.

About 100 meters away from the compound, a two-story madrasah, which was damaged by military aerial bombings, stands. Educational materials for learning Arabic and Koran were found inside the structure.

Outside, a sign reading "Camp Imam Muallam Dhabab" hangs. Behind it are fields just planted with cassava.

10 Gold Cross awardees

The flag-raising ceremony was meant "to assert government victory," said Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza, Southern Command chief. "This is not just the victory for the military but for the people of Sulu as well and everybody who wants peace to reign."

TUNNELS inside the captured MNLF camp in Bitanag, Jolo, fits Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza. AP

A soldier crumpled a rebel banner and flag as other troops erupted in cheers.

Among those who attended were Sulu Gov. Benjamin Loong and Sulu Rep. Munir Arbison.

Braganza pinned Gold Cross medals—the military's highest combat award—on 10 soldiers who showed "exemplary performance" during the assault.

The awardees were led by Lt. Col. Pablo Lorenzo, chief of the 35th IB; Lt. Col. Elmer Estopin of the 10th Marine Battalion Landing Team; Lt. Col. Macairog Alberto, commander of the 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion; Maj. Federick Cutler of the 205th Air Strike Wing; Capt. Federico Diosanta of the 15th Army Armory; 2nd Lt. Roberto Reyes of the 9th Field Artillery; TSgt. Paulino Boca of the 53rd IB, and Privates First Class Asban Kasri of the 35th IB, James Dolotallas and Basri Habir of the 53rd IB.

MNLF integrees

Habir and Kasri were among the more than 500 MNLF fighters who were integrated into the AFP in 2000.

"I want to dedicate this award to all my companions who worked hard these past days," Habir said.

Despite Braganza's claim to victory, other military officials said they were still clearing the area.

"We are still pursuing remnants of the renegade forces in nearby barangays and towns," said Col. Nehemias Pajarito, commander of the Army's 104th Infantry Brigade.

On Tuesday night, movements among the MNLF renegades were monitored, Alberto said.

The military shelled at least six pumpboats carrying gunmen in Barangay Kulaykulay here, he reported. "They were either reinforcement or retreating forces, we managed to sink those seacrafts."

Retreating rebels

Loong said the government would rebuild the damaged property.

Maj. Benjam Espinosa, commander of the 4th MBLT, said the retreating rebels burned some of the houses in the area.

"What they did was before withdrawal, they fired laser shots. We were about to put off the burning house but when we heard some explosions, we just let it burn. There were stored ammunition inside," Espinosa said.

"We will continue with the punitive action not only against Malik group but also against other lawless elements, we still have to neutralize the Abu Sayyaf leaders Radulan Sahiron and Doktor Abu," Braganza said.

"We have disrupted their operations and reduced their capability," Dema-ala told reporters. He said the rebels abandoned the camp after running out of food, forcing them to slaughter cattle owned by residents of nearby villages.

About 3,000 soldiers and Marines have been pursuing Misuari's followers—backed by Abu Sayyaf guerrillas—since they attacked an Army detachment in Panamao on Feb. 7.

The rebel strikes were apparently a retaliation for the death of a number of people, including a child, who were caught in a crossfire when troops assaulted a community of Misuari's followers while pursuing suspected Abu Sayyaf members.

21-gun salute

During the burial rites yesterday, Villanueva was given a 21-gun salute as an Air Force helicopter dropped flowers on his grave site, Army spokesperson Maj. Bartolome Bacarro said in a phone interview.

Among the military officials who brought the battalion commander to his final resting place were Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Efren Abu, Army chief Lt. Gen. Generoso Senga, and 1st Infantry Division chief Brig. Gen. Gabriel Habacon.

As his coffin was lowered into the grave, Villanueva's classmates at the Philippine Military Academy (Class 1986) sang their alma mater song, Bacarro said.

On Tuesday night, a necrological service was held at the St. Ignatius Cathedral in Camp Aguinaldo.

"Fallen he may be, but his memory and the cause he fought heroically for remain in our hearts," Senga said in his eulogy.

Heart of a leader

"When he was in the hospital, before he breathed his last, he even managed to encourage a subordinate who was writhing in pain to hang on. In this, we see the heart of a great leader and a truly compassionate commander," he added. *With reports from Alcuin Papa and Luige A. del Puerto in Manila, and INQUIRER wires*

WHAT WENT BEFORE

THE MNLF signed a peace treaty with the government in 1996, ending a decades-long armed campaign. However, thousands of rebels refused to disarm and many joined a failed revolt allegedly led by Misuari in November 2001.

The government has alleged the gunmen have been supported by the Abu Sayyaf, a Moro bandit group that has waged a bombing and kidnapping campaign and has been included on the US state department's "foreign terrorist organization" blacklist.

The Abu Sayyaf has claimed credit for a series of bombings in the cities of Makati, Davao and General Santos late Monday that killed seven people.

Earlier, Malik made an impassioned plea recently for support, according to a report by Agence France-Presse.

In a tape recorded message, Malik called on fellow Muslims to unify against "abuses" by troops cracking down on militants in the Sulu archipelago.

"My brothers and sisters in Jolo and the surrounding islands, we have to help each other. If you let the military get away with these abuses, we will be like chickens, being eaten one by one," he urged.

House rushing antiterror measure

From page A1

ties for it, said it was about time the chamber acted on the measure.

"This will show the world that we have not wavered in our antiterror campaign, especially in light of the recent bombings in three urban centers," Libanan said.

HB 2639 also brings the crime of terrorism within the coverage of the Anti-Money Laundering Law, and seeks the creation of an Anti-Terrorist Action Council.

Climate of confidence

Parañaque Rep. Roilo Golez, chair of the House committee on national defense, said wiretapping was allowed in certain criminal cases, such as sedition and kidnapping, as long as there was a court order backing it.

Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco, chair of the committee on foreign affairs, said the enactment of the antiterror bill into law would indicate to the international community the Philippines' determination to end terrorism here.

He said the proposed law would also promote a "climate of confidence" here and encourage the US and British governments to lift their negative advisories regarding travel to the Philippines.

Cuenco said lawmakers should not wait for bigger terror attacks before acting on HB 2639.

"Apprehensions on the bill cannot be resolved unless lawmakers start deliberations on [it]. If we don't act now, we will be crying for revenge without giving the authorities all the weapons against the enemy," he said.

More teeth

In the upper chamber, Sen. Panfilo Lacson called on Malacañang to certify as urgent a similar bill that he had filed so as to give the government "more teeth against terrorism."

He said Malacañang should also certify as urgent his two other measures involving the improvement of the government's capability to track down terrorists—Senate Bill No. 845, which would require the registration of prepaid subscriber identification module (SIM) cards, and SB 833, which would implement a national identification system in the country.

The antiterrorism measure proposed by Lacson classifies as acts of terrorism "arson using poisonous substances to extort or bring about loss of lives or property, or destruction of industrial or business plants or of the environment, or to paralyze civil or military installations, communications, or power transmission lines."

The measure allows law enforcers to conduct electronic surveillance on suspected terrorists, and punishes anyone who reveals, tampers with or destroys the information gathered from the tapping.

"[The bomb attacks on Monday] should be a wake-up call for us to have an antiterror bill passed," Lacson said.

Sen. Alfredo Lim said it was about time Congress came up with an antiterrorism law in view of the Feb. 14 bombings.

Lim said he hoped that Sen. Manuel Villar's committee on public order and illegal drugs would take up the matter soon.

Not the Abu Sayyaf

But Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel said the antiterrorism bill should be passed only in consideration of the 9/11 attacks in the United States, and not the Valentine's Day bombings here.

"[This is] because I am not sure that the [Monday] bombings were the handiwork of terrorists like the Abu Sayaff," he told reporters.

Pimentel said the Abu Sayyaf was not capable of launching an organized attack such as what happened on Feb. 14, when bombs exploded almost simultaneously in three cities.

"The military claims the group is on the run, so how can it have the capacity to do that?" he said.

The senator also said the bombings reminded him of what happened immediately before the 1972 declaration of martial law by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

"We have to look back to our own history to learn," he said. "I'm not so sure that what happened on Feb. 14 should be used as a justification for an antiterrorism law."

Pimentel said that while he favored an antiterrorism law, "we must make sure that we are not panicked into enacting [it] without due consideration of what is really happening on the ground."

Asked who could be behind the Feb. 14 bombings, Pimentel said there were many groups that wanted to take advantage of the prevailing situation and that had their respective agenda.

"Judging from history, we cannot rule out that some renegade soldiers ... could have done that," he said.

ID system

Like Lacson, Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes is pushing for the implementation of a national ID system, a project that was shelved earlier and that militant groups had described as a threat to civil liberties.

In an interview with the INQUIRER on Tuesday night, Reyes said a national ID system would not only "assist the government and the citizenry in transacting business" but also "enable the government to better monitor how services are being delivered to the people, and how [it] can better address their problems."

Earlier Tuesday night, Reyes spoke before the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. and announced his support for the ID system.

"We will push for it," he told the businessmen, saying such a system would expedite elections and business transactions.

Reyes also said upright citizens should have no reason to oppose such a system: "As they say, if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear."

Earlier, then National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said such an ID system could be used to combat swindling and electoral fraud, and prevent terrorists from getting into the country on false identity papers.

But the Supreme Court had ruled that such a system posed "a clear and present danger" and would violate a person's right to privacy.

The ruling was in response to a proposal from then President Fidel Ramos that a national ID system be put in place.

QC markets possible targets

AS CONGRESS turned its attention to antiterrorism legislation, the Philippine National Police hastened to further beef up public security.

The Central Police District sent cops to public markets, following an intelligence report that these were the next bombing target, said Senior Supt. Nicasio Radovan Jr.

"Whether [the report] is true or not, I will take it seriously," the CPD director told the INQUIRER.

Radovan deployed plainclothesmen to the Nepa-Q market on Edsa, Farmers' Market in Cubao, and the markets at Muñoz and Commonwealth—the four establishments in Quezon City named as possible targets in the report.

He said the CPD also secured smaller public markets like the one on Congressional Avenue.

"We deployed more than enough security," he said. "We're not trying to alarm the public. We're promoting awareness so the public can prepare."

Alarmed bishops

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines expressed alarm over the Valentine's Day bombings and sought heightened security in churches, mosques, malls, markets, schools and other public places.

It also urged the government to employ more effective and immediate strategies to arrest those responsible for the bomb attacks.

CBCP president and Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla said the government should "increase the capacity and sophistication of the [police and military] intelligence and investigating networks."

"We are alarmed by the almost simultaneous occurrence of the bombing incidents. It was an instance of a terrorist plan getting more highly sophisticated and supremely dangerous. Government response should be more effective and immediate," the CBCP said in a statement.

It added: "We condemn as maliciously inhuman the killing of innocent civilians. Such dastardly crimes are unconscionable because they clearly violate God's/Allah's teachings and therefore should be branded as unchristian and un-Islamic."

Tourism

Philippine Tourism Authority chief Robert Dean Barbers called on authorities to do their best in protecting tourist areas.

"We should make our foreign visitors safe and confident against terrorist attacks. We have to uphold peace and order in our country because this would serve as a catalyst in boosting our tourism industry," Barbers said in a statement.

He said the tourism industry must be given security priority.

"The increase of tourist arrivals is a very good barometer [of] our country's economic recovery, he said, adding that the PTA was anticipating more than 3 million tourist arrivals this year.

Apprehension

Barbers expressed apprehension that a drop in tourist arrivals—similar to what followed the abduction of tourists from Palawan's Dos Palmas resort and the attack on Davao's Pearl Farm resort a few years back—would again occur as a result of the Monday bombings.

Barbers denounced the bomb attacks, saying its perpetrators were "harmful and deadly bacteria" that must be dealt with firmly. *Reports from Leila B. Salaverria, Christian Esguerra, Blanche S. Rivera and Jerome Aning*

Bomb evidence hosed down the drain, say probers

From page A1

dousing the blaze that resulted from the bomb explosion that tore through a bus on Monday in Makati City.

"We had a hard time retrieving the components of the bomb" and analyzing these, Chief Supt. Wilfredo Garcia said in an interview.

But Garcia, director of the Southern Police District (SPD), stressed that the destruction of the evidence was not intentional. He said the firemen "only did what they had to do" and made "the safety of the casualties and bystanders their primary concern."

Elsewhere, National Capital Region Police Office chief Director Avelino Razon also said the investigation into the bomb attack had been hampered by the fact that evidence at the crime scene was hosed down by responding firemen.

"The water destroyed most of the evidence," Razon said.

Cell phone parts

Garcia said, however, that SPD scene-of-the-crime operatives had been able to find certain components of the bomb and were now focused on determining the nature of the explosive used.

He said wires, an electrical blasting cap and 9-volt batteries had been recovered at the site. He said cell phone parts, specifically liquid crystal displays, had been found as well, indicating that the bomb was "cell-phone detonated."

"We just need to clarify the specific chemicals and high explosive materials used to make the bomb," Garcia said, explaining that the identification of the materials would enable police to compare the bomb with the explosives used in earlier attacks.

"If we find out that the bombs are similar in composition, then we can conclude that there is a single group behind the incidents," he said.

Balintawak bombing

Razon said police were looking into the similarities between the bus bombings in Makati on Monday and in Balintawak on Oct. 18, 2002.

He said both bombs were triggered by a cell phone and were high-velocity explosive devices with maximum blast effect and low fragmentary residue.

According to another ranking police official who asked not to be named, the minimal political impact of the Balintawak attack was a lesson learned by the bandit group Abu Sayyaf.

"So this time, they decided to bomb the Makati area for bigger impact," the official said, adding that the perpetrators had also carefully considered the time of the explosion: "In 2002, the bomb exploded late in the evening, while in the Ayala incident [on Monday], the bomb exploded early in the evening."

Abu Solaiman, supposed spokesperson of the Abu Sayyaf, had earlier claimed responsibility for the Valentine's Day attacks in Makati and the other cities of Davao and General Santos. But Director General Edgar Aglipay of the Philippine National Police said Solaiman's claim should not be so readily accepted.

'Traditional suspects'

Garcia said the "traditional suspects" were the Abu Sayyaf, the al-Qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

But he stressed that police were considering all possible suspects, including the Balik Islam and certain criminal groups. The Balik Islam Unity Congress is a group formed by Islamic converts in the wake of the controversy surrounding the arrest of a number of Muslims early in 2004.

Garcia also said three forensic experts of the Australian Federal Police had volunteered to help in the investigation.

"With their help and the efforts of our local investigators, we are hoping to solve this in the shortest possible time," he said.

Garcia added that police had been coordinating with owners of bus companies so that drivers and conductors would be instructed to be extra vigilant against terror attacks. *With a report from Nancy C. Carvajal*

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Travel group gives RP low security rating

AIRPORT SECURITY: "High risk"

ROGER MARGALLO

By Nikko Dizon

EVEN before the bombs went off on Monday, the International Air Transport Association (Iata) had already given the Philippines a high-risk security rating for travel.

The organization's assessment team gave the country a security rating of 4, one level short of the maximum security rating.

A reliable airport source showed reporters on Tuesday Iata's latest rating advisory, dated Feb. 4.

"The Philippines has always had extra-normal (security) conditions. We have international and local terrorists, insurgents, rightists, leftists. We have the complete cast," the source said on condition of anonymity.

In its assessment, Iata cited a memorandum from the Western Police District (WPD) about supposed bomb threats that the British, United States and United Arab Emirates (UAE) embassies received last Jan. 30 to be carried out purportedly by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Aside from the embassies, the MILF reportedly planned to attack "high-profile shopping centers and rail transit systems."

Threats unconfirmed

However, the Iata memorandum noted that the intelligence report was "uncorroborated" and that MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu had denied the allegation, saying he suspected the government was merely out to "ruin the MILF's credibility."

The INQUIRER called up Iata country manager Evelyn del Rosario for comment but was informed that she was in a meeting.

An airline source, in a separate interview, confirmed that Iata member airlines in the Philippines had been furnished with the organization's latest advisory.

Pakistan also rated 4

The source said that Iata's assessment team was in the Philippines last year "for a regional audit" and its assessment was contained in the Feb. 4 advisory.

Aside from the Philippines, Pakistan was also given a rating of 4. Thailand received a security rating of 3, and Australia, 2.

The memo showed Iata's five levels of security: Level 1 is minimal threat; Level 2, low threat; Level 3, moderate threat; Level 4, high threat, and Level 5, very high threat.

The airline source explained that Iata member airlines would regularly request an audit of the regions where its members were based.

Security needs

"It's actually for the benefit of the airlines for them to improve their security (measures) as well," the source said.

Nevertheless, the source added that it was up to the government to improve its security arrangements at the airports.

"The land side, air side and external areas, or the vicinity of the airport or anything leading to the airport, should be placed on tight security when the country is given a high security risk level such as level 4," the source said.

Iata has 247 member airlines worldwide. The organization regularly rates the safety of airports around the world and informs its members of the airport ratings.

Sandigan junks case vs Bejo

By Armand N. Nocum

AFTER 15 years, the Sandiganbayan yesterday nullified two graft cases against Tacloban City Mayor Alfredo "Bejo" Romualdez in connection with the alleged questionable property deals by two government-owned corporations.

But the brother of former First Lady Imelda Marcos was far from being off the hook as the Sandiganbayan had also ordered the Office of the Ombudsman to refile the case to correct what the court said legal defects in the information.

In a nine-page resolution, the fifth division of the Sandiganbayan said the Presidential Commission on Good Government had no authority to file the case against Romualdez 15 years ago.

The resolution, penned by Associate Justice Roland Jurado, said it was the Office of the Ombudsman, the prosecuting arm of the government, which should have filed the case, not the PCGG.

In one case (Criminal Case No. 13698), Romualdez had been linked to the sale of the Engineer Island, which was owned by the government's National Shipyard and Steel Corp., to private firm Bataan Shipyard and Engineering Company, Inc. for P4.41 million. But the PCGG claimed at that time the value of the property was P12.02 million.

In the second case (CC No. 13700), Romualdez had been accused of intervening in the 1979 highly questionable sale of the 3,343-square-meter Pandacan Slipway by the state-owned National Development Corp. to Baseco for P836,000.

In these two deals, the PCGG claimed, Romualdez allegedly used his ties with Marcos to pressure the government-owned corporations to sell their properties for a song.

"An information must be exhibited or presented to the court by the prosecuting attorney or someone authorized by law. If not, the court cannot acquire jurisdiction. The prosecution erred in merely adopting the earlier resolutions filed with this court by the PCGG," said the resolution also concurred by Associate Justice Teresita Diaz-Baldoz and Ma. Cristina Cortez-Estrada, chair of the division.

Although the Ombudsman's Office of the Special Prosecutor conducted a reinvestigation on the case last September 19, 2000, it said it was merely adopting the case filed by the PCGG which by then was already 11 years old.

Such supposed legal shortcut, the court said, rendered the case fatally defective.

The court, however, ordered the Ombudsman prosecution office to file a new information within 30 days.

SC clears judge of bias for Imelda

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court has dismissed the government's administrative case against a Manila judge who allegedly showed bias for Imelda Marcos, the wife of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, when he was hearing the dollar-salting cases against the former First Lady.

In a resolution dated Feb. 8, the high court junked the Presidential Commission on Good Government's case against Manila Regional Trial Court Judge Oscar Barrientos, who was removed from the Imelda cases in August 2004.

The PCGG had accused Barrientos of "patent judicial misconduct" when he allowed Imelda to travel abroad in late 2003.

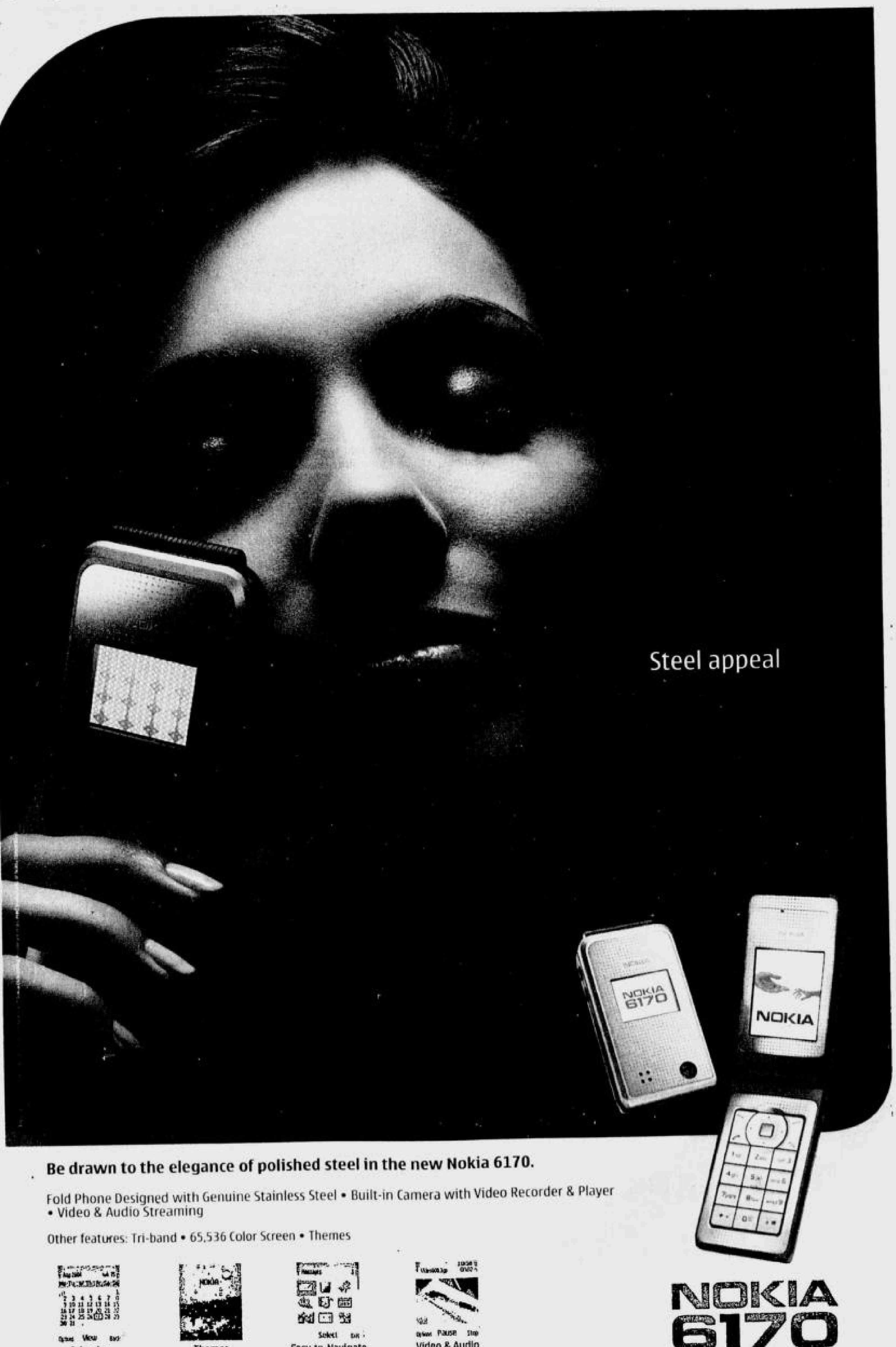
The high court said it was dismissing "for lack of merit" the PCGG's complaint against Barrientos on the recommendation of the Office of the Court Administrator.

But it referred to the Office of the Bar Confidant the allegation that Marcos lawyer Robert A.C. Sison had a private meeting with Barrientos inside his chambers "on a matter pending before the court."

The high court also clarified that the Court of Appeals order of Aug. 12, 2004, directing Barrientos to "desist" from trying the cases of Imelda still stood.

The high court said it was issuing the clarification after it denied on Sept. 7, 2004 a PCGG request to reassign the cases to another judge.

The tribunal said it rejected the PCGG request as it was actually a request for inhibition "which is judicial in nature and cannot be a proper subject of an administrative proceeding."



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RP credit rating cut 2 notches

From page A1

After trading at five-year record levels early yesterday, the Philippine Stock Exchange composite index closed 11.62 points or 0.56 percent lower to 2,078.48.

In a statement from Singapore, Moody's announced it had lowered the Philippine foreign-currency rating for government bonds to B1 from Ba2 and the long-term foreign-currency country ceiling for bonds to B1 from Ba2.

Based on Moody's own definition of bond ratings, bonds that are rated B "generally lack characteristics of the desirable investment while assurance of interest and principal payments or maintenance of other terms of the contract over any long period of time may be small.

A Ba rating is deemed higher than B but is still judged to have speculative elements and uncertainty of position and its future cannot be considered well-assured. Often, the protection of interest and principal payments may be very moderate, and thereby not well-safeguarded during both good and bad times in the future.

Moody's also downgraded the long-term foreign-currency ceiling for bank deposits to B1 from Ba3, and the local-currency rating of the government to B1 from Ba2.

No further downgrade

But at the very least, Moody's outlook for all of the ratings was rendered "stable," which means that no further downgrade is likely in the near term.

In January last year, Moody's also cut the sovereign credit rating by one notch to Ba2, making the Philippines one of the only four countries it downgraded and one of the eight which was given a "negative" outlook amid the slow pace of fiscal reforms in the country.

Painful choices

A "negative" outlook means that another downgrade may happen in the near term.

"Moody's recognizes that the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo inherited a much-weakened fiscal structure, yet progress in enacting reform is proving difficult as the President's majority coalition in Congress grapples with politically painful choices," the rating agency said.

It noted that some improvement in tax collections had reversed the decline in the ratio of revenue to gross domestic product (GDP), yet the broader public-sector debt ratios—government debt to GDP and government debt to revenues—remained well above those of countries with similar ratings.

"Thus, public sector borrowing requirements will remain large even with more progress in fiscal reform, leaving the Philippines vulnerable to economic, financial, and political shocks, as well as to sudden changes in market sentiment," Moody's said.

Drastic reforms necessary

The rating agency said the rapid implementation of a "front-loaded" fiscal reform program coupled with the elimination of losses and more progress in the long-delayed privatization of National Power Corp. were "necessary" to lay the foundation for future improvement in the country's ratings.

The front-loading of fiscal consolidation, which was also sought by the International Monetary Fund during its last country review, means that the government must execute even more drastic reforms to wipe out its budget deficit before 2009.

Even with a successful implementation of public finance reform measures, it will take some time for the country to reduce its public-sector debt to levels compatible with higher ratings, according to Moody's.

Because budget financing continued to rely heavily on foreign borrowings, fiscal performance has a direct effect on the country's external payments position, the credit rating agency said.

Thanks to OFWs' inflows

It said that after the 1997 regional financial crisis, the Philippines, unlike other countries in the region, had not been able to attract substantial amounts of foreign equity investment. Instead, it relied heavily on foreign debt for both public sector and balance-of-payments financing.

The rating agency also noted that while the Philippines enjoyed an external current account surplus thanks to buoyant income inflows from overseas workers, underlying weaknesses could undermine the external payments position.

"The recovery in exports in late 2004 appears tentative, concentrated in electronics, and lagging that of the Philippines' regional competitors, suggesting that Philippine competitiveness may have begun to atrophy," Moody's said.

Social unrest

"The external sector won't likely be able to serve as a reliable and strong source of economic growth until the investment environment is further improved," it added.

Moody's said confidence factors had contributed to the slippage in the country's overall economic and financial performance.

Falling short of citing the recent bomb blasts which shook the country, the rating agency said ongoing political and social unrest also "undermined efforts to reestablish confidence."

"Nevertheless, a vigorous, sustained program of public-sector fiscal reform would not only bolster confidence in the policy credibility of the government, but improve investment and growth prospects as well," it said.

Local bank ratings also cut

In line with the sovereign debt rating downgrade, Moody's also lowered the foreign currency debt and deposit ratings to B1 of 10 Philippine banks.

The banks were Allied Banking Corp., Banco de Oro Universal Bank, Bank of the Philippine Islands, Development Bank of the Philippines, Equitable PCIBank, Land Bank of the Philippines, Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., Philippine National Bank, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. and Union Bank of the Philippines.

The B1 credit rating of United Coconut Planters Bank was affirmed with a stable outlook.

The local currency deposit ratings of DBP and PNB were downgraded to Ba2 from Ba1.

Consequently, the local currency subordinated debt of PNB was lowered to Ba3 from Ba2, a notch below its new senior local currency rating.

Similarly, the foreign currency subordinated debt ratings of Metrobank and Equitable PCIBank were lowered to B1 from Ba2.

"Moody's believes the government's willingness to assist the system's major and state-controlled banks remains strong. However, the government's fiscal constraints, as well as the potential for regulatory hurdles, could impede the administration of support to these important banks," it said.

Japan's R&I

R&I currently gives the Philippines a BBB- rating for its foreign currency long-term credit and a-2 to its short-term credit.

Against the backdrop of bullish exports and growing personal consumption, R&I noted that the country's real GDP increased by 6.1 percent in 2004 from a year ago, the fastest rate of expansion since 1989.

The Japanese rating firm also cited other favorable developments such as the huge remittances from overseas Filipino workers which were contributing to the ongoing current balance surplus, the low short-term debt ratio and the improvements in the fiscal deficit as a ratio of GDP.

The agency recognized the number of tax reform laws enacted to raise taxes, such as those on alcohol and cigarettes.

"There are concerns, however, that from 2005 onward, economic growth will be depressed by tax increases and cutbacks in public expenditures, and that a rise in global interest rates will cast a shadow over steady exports," R&I said.

To lure foreign capital

It warned that prospective foreign investments may not be enough to improve the country's capacity to grow in the long term.

"To attract foreign capital, the Philippines must rapidly improve its infrastructure, which it has been slow in upgrading, but there are fiscal constraints as well and substantial improvement is difficult to anticipate for some time to come," it said. *With a report from AFP*

IN THE KNOW

What's a credit rating?

PRIVATE credit agencies like Standard & Poor's (S&P), Moody's and Fitch provide a way of assessing a country's or a company's ability to pay its debts.

The annual credit ratings that they release reflect their opinion, as of a specific date, of the credit worthiness of a country, company, security or obligation.

Because credit agencies derive most their earnings from providing corporate ratings, it is said that they have no incentive to either favor or be biased against a particular country. Ratings that are frequently out of line with the market experience of public and private creditors of a particular country will adversely affect an agency's reputation.

While rating agencies have less intensive discussions with governments than institutions like the International Monetary Fund, they have the advantage of reflecting market perceptions of government policies and credibility.

A deteriorating credit rating of a country can affect its ability to service its debts since it raises the cost of the country's borrowings. If rating agencies recognize weakening fundamentals, then a downgrade can serve as a signal and precede the onset of a crisis.

A credit rating also affects an issuer's or borrower's access to capital

However, credit agencies failed to see the signs of an impending crisis in Asia in 1997. They maintained high ratings that encouraged capital inflows. They later gave successive downgrades within short intervals that likely added to a sense of panic.

The three major ratings agencies S&P, Moody's and Fitch are the "nationally recognized statistical rating organizations" by the United States Securities and Exchange Commission. All have been in the business since the start of the 20th century except for S&P, which traces its roots to 1860.

S&P and Moody's use different symbols in their ratings, but they usually come out with the same ratings—differing only by about a notch in most cases. This suggests that they look at similar macro-economic factors.

.Maricar Tolosa, PDI Research

SOURCES: UNITED STATES SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION, AND UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Reduced rating . . .

From page A1

hope that "the market will see through this downgrade and all those noises to realize there has been a change in the dynamics in the Philippines."

Long expected

The currency and stock markets tumbled but their decline was not as steep as businessmen had expected a two-notch downgrade.

"The negative outlook had long been expected and had been discounted in the financial market," said Francis Chua, executive vice president of the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce.

Standard Chartered yesterday said it was "disappointed" with Moody's two-notch downgrade but it expected the Philippines to bounce quickly from the setback.

The British bank had made a glowing report on the Philippines last month, ruling out a two-notch downgrade due to major strides made by the Arroyo administration in fiscal reforms.

"Clearly this is a disappointment but we have seen sentiment hold up relatively well after the Abu Sayyaf bombings earlier and markets appear to be taking today's setback in stride.

The peso is down 20 cents on the US dollar and the local stock market is down only 0.5 percent. This suggests the market wasn't completely taken by surprise," said Standard Chartered regional economist Mike Moran, who is based in Hong Kong.

Wake-up call

Businessman Raul T. Concepcion said the effect of the downgrade was "minimal" because the country's loans were long term.

Before yesterday's downgrade, the Philippines was already paying a high premium for its foreign borrowings at 444.8 basis points over the benchmark 15-year US Treasury notes or nearly double the rate paid by Indonesia at 234.6 basis points although the Philippines was just two notches below the investment grade compared with Indonesia, which was three notches off.

A stockbroker said that investors were taking the downgrade positively because they see it more of a "wake-up call" for Congress to address the fiscal problem, specifically the passage of the controversial increase in the value-added tax.

Senators generally downplayed the downgrade.

Ignore Moody's

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. took to the Senate floor to tell his colleagues to "ignore" Moody's.

"We should tell our economic managers, do not tremble (on this development)," Pimentel said.

In fact, he said that in many countries in Europe, and in India and Malaysia, these credit rating agencies "all have been repudiated."

"It's as if we have to beat to their tempo," was how Sen. Joker Arroyo reacted to the downgrade of Moody's. "We should act as if Moody's does not exist," Arroyo told reporters.

Sen. Manuel Villar, chair of the Senate finance committee, said the international credit rating firms were working like a cartel. "It's very rare that one of the three rating firms will deviate (from the other's level)," said Villar, referring to Moody's, Standard and Poor's and Fitch.

No way but up

In the House of Representatives, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda is taking comfort that there is no way but up for the country after the downgrade.

"At least the downgrade threat is now out of the way and Congress would pass new taxes because we need to do them with or without the downgrade," Salceda, an economic adviser to the President, said.

"It is easier to bounce from this lower level and I believe that given the slew of reforms, no further downgrade is justified." *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Michael Lim Ubac*

Violence threatens to derail economy anew, solon laments

By Carlito Pablo

JUST when the economy is looking up, violence erupts.

Rep. Joey Salceda (Lakas-Kampi, Albay) said that such was the frustration being felt by foreign businessmen in the wake of the deadly Feb. 14 bombings and the fighting in Sulu.

"It's always like that. In 1989 (during the time of then President Corazon Aquino), there was the coup. During the time of (then President Fidel V.) Ramos, it was the Asian economic crisis," Salceda said in an interview.

Salceda, regarded as the resident economist of the House, talked to reporters after delivering a presentation at a House forum on the country's economic outlook for 2005, which he said was entitled "Sisyphus on the Rise."

Sisyphus is the character in the Greek mythology condemned for eternity to roll a boulder up a hill. But the rock rolls back again after almost reaching the top.

In his presentation, Salceda acknowledged the threat posed to the country's economic expansion by factors like the peace and order situation.

"We need to build a buffer against external shocks and domestic events risk just like what happened yesterday (the Feb. 14 bombings)," Salceda said.

He didn't elaborate on this point during his presentation but told reporters later: "We need to have more reserves."

"We need more cash, more dollars. We should go for a more aggressive deficit reduction. So whatever happens, we're on the safe side," Salceda said.

He noted that he had just returned from the United States where he made presentations before groups like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, US State Department and the private sector on the outlook of the Philippine economy for 2005.

Salceda said during the House forum that corruption was a persistent major concern expressed in his presentations in the United States. He said several sectors were keenly interested in what would happen to the cases filed against retired Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia, a former military comptroller.

"We're out of the bottom but still in the hole," sums up Salceda's economic presentation in the US.

Salceda said the Arroyo administration was expected to solve the fiscal crisis this year.

The budget deficit, which has given the government a huge headache in the last two years, will be tamed at P160 billion in 2005, he said.

Salceda said these developments would be followed by a "rapid investment growth in 2006" driven by "nascent up cycles" in such sectors as property, construction and food.

He said that based on his talks with the country's business leaders, Philippine corporations were sitting on a large hoard of cash for further investments.

Canada issues travel advisory

CANADA on Wednesday advised its citizens in the Philippines to exercise "extreme caution."

The British and US governments issued similar warnings in reaction to the bomb attacks in three cities on Monday that killed at least seven people and injured 151 others.

"Attacks continue to occur in Manila, the region of Mindanao, and the areas where insurgent groups are active," the Canadian advisory said.

"Bombs have exploded in shopping malls, on public transportation, at airports and port facilities, in places of worship and in other public areas," it said.

Canadians were also advised not to travel to Mindanao.

But Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said such adverse travel advisories should eventually be "discontinued or reversed" because local authorities "were on top" of the security situation.

He said the Philippine government had told the concerned countries that such travel advisories would "continue to be unfair to us, and therefore, [these] should be corrected."

Romulo pointed out that terrorism knew no bounds. "Terrorist attacks are all over the world. It happens in other countries in the world, not only here." *AFP, TJ Burgonio*

SC denies motions of Chiong sisters' convicted killer

From page A1

released only yesterday, the high court denied "for lack of merit" the motion for reconsideration of Larrañaga, a scion of the powerful Osmeña clan, for the court to reverse its resolution on Sept. 21, 2004.

Main motion

In the September resolution, the tribunal denied the two petitions filed by Larrañaga's lawyers, one calling for the referral of the case to the Court of Appeals and the other a motion for oral arguments.

Clerk of Court Luzviminda Puno said that yesterday's resolution did not deal with Larrañaga's main motion to have his conviction overturned.

"The decision on that might be released soon. The court has already decided on his other motions like this one," Puno said.

She said that while the tribunal had ruled that the Court of Appeals should review death penalty cases, it was still within the high court's discretion to decide if it wanted to review a particular case.

Larrañaga was one of the seven young men convicted for the rape and murder of sisters Jacqueline, 23, and Marie Joy Chiong, 20, in Cebu City in 1997.

The Chiong sisters were abducted on the evening of July 16, 1997, while waiting for their father to pick them up at the Ayala Center Cebu. Mary Joy's body was found two days later in a secluded ravine in nearby Carcar town.

Jacqueline's body was never found.

In February 2004, the Supreme Court upgraded the penalty of the accused to death by lethal injection.

The other convicts

Besides Larrañaga, the others convicted were Josman Aznar, Rowen Adlawan, Alberto Cano, Ariel Balansag and brothers James Anthony and James Andrew Uy. James Andrew, a minor at the time of the incident, was sentenced to life in prison.

Larrañaga asked the high court to reconsider its decision, claiming that he was in Quezon City when the Chiongs were abducted and brutally murdered.

In a press conference last November, his friends and classmates also claimed that Larrañaga was not in Cebu on July 17, 1997.

"We were together in our laboratory class from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. of July 17," said Edna Zagala, Paco's classmate at the Center for Culinary Arts (CCA) on Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City.

"I specifically remember him because he stood before me in the kitchen at around 8 a.m. of July 17," said another classmate, Kathy Malvar.

Yet another classmate, Karen Tiong, said she saw Paco on July 16 and 17 because "he used to sit behind me in class."

"We were with Paco from 10 p.m. of July 16 until around 1 a.m. at the R&R restaurant along Katipunan," according to Francisco Jarque and Sebastian Ceno.

Chef Rowena Bautista, Paco's teacher at CCA, reiterated her testimony that she saw him at the center on July 16 at 6:30 p.m.

The young Larrañaga is a nephew of Sen. Sergio Osmeña III and Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña.

Palace sees no conflict of interest issue on private advisers

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG sees no conflict of interest issue in tapping prominent private individuals as consultants and advisers of President Macapagal-Arroyo even if they continue to hold business interests.

Communications Director Silvestre Afable said in a statement that presidential advisers and consultants do not represent the government in contracts and transactions or make decisions for the presidential office.

"Their strict role is to provide advice and counsel, which the President is free to heed, reject or ignore," said Afable who issued the statement following criticisms against presidential adviser Roberto Romulo who has maintained his business holding while giving advise to the President on international competitiveness and the opportunities in the reconstruction of Iraq.

Afable said the presidential advisers and consultants were different from Cabinet members who were required to divest themselves of their holdings that may conflict with their discharge of public office.

"To require the same treatment to advisers and consultants exercising purely advisory functions outside the executive line of command may not be in the public interest," Afable said.

If the government forces the advisers and consultants to divest, Afable said "competent persons would be constrained to shy away from extending help to the President and would be unable to contribute to sound policy-making."

He noted that all Presidents since the Quezon administration had tapped businessmen as advisers and consultants "because of their expertise in their respective fields to provide advice in the formulation of policies and programs or to assist in the effective implementation of programs."

This advice, Afable said, was crucial not only in implementing programs in the domestic sector but also in helping the country steer through the global economy.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, February 17, 2005
1st Week of Lent
1st Reading: Es C:12,14-16,23-25
Gospel: Mt 7:7-12

Jesus said to his disciples, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks, receives; whoever seeks, finds; and the door will be opened to him who knocks. Would any of you give a stone to your son when he asks for bread? Or give him a snake, when he asks for a fish? As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

"So, do to others whatever you would that others do to you: there you have the Law and the Prophets."

Commentary

Esther fasts and prays on behalf of her people, to save them from death and extinction. And the people fast and pray with her, knowing that she will approach the king, and put her own life on the line by begging for their lives. And we are told how to pray by Jesus. To ask, to knock, to seek and it will be given and opened for us. God gives and knows what we need. We do not always ask wisely or for what is needed when we pray for what we immediately want, especially for ourselves and those close to us. We are to trust that God knows what we need—we have been taught to pray Our Father and to start with those crucial things and we are reminded that we are to pray, obey the Law and the Prophets first, remembering that we are God's people. Our Father, help us to remember all the people of the world, especially those facing death, violence at the hands of others and extinction by starvation and war and may we trust that you will continue to take care of all of us. Amen.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

LABOR LAW (LABOR RELATIONS LAW)—Management prerogative to transfer an employee—In the transfer of respondent from the Pensions Department to the Legal Department, there was no demotion in rank nor diminution of the salaries, benefits and privileges. But this is not the only standard that must be satisfied in order to substantiate the transfer. In the pursuit of its legitimate business interests, management has the prerogative to transfer or assign employees from one office or area of operation to another—provided there is no demotion in rank or diminution of salary, benefits, and other privileges; and the action is not motivated by discrimination, made in bad faith, or effected as a form of punishment or demotion without sufficient cause. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Chico-Nazario, Second Division, Philippine American Life and General Insurance Co. vs Gramaje, G. R. No. 156963, November 11, 2004]

By R. B. Vera

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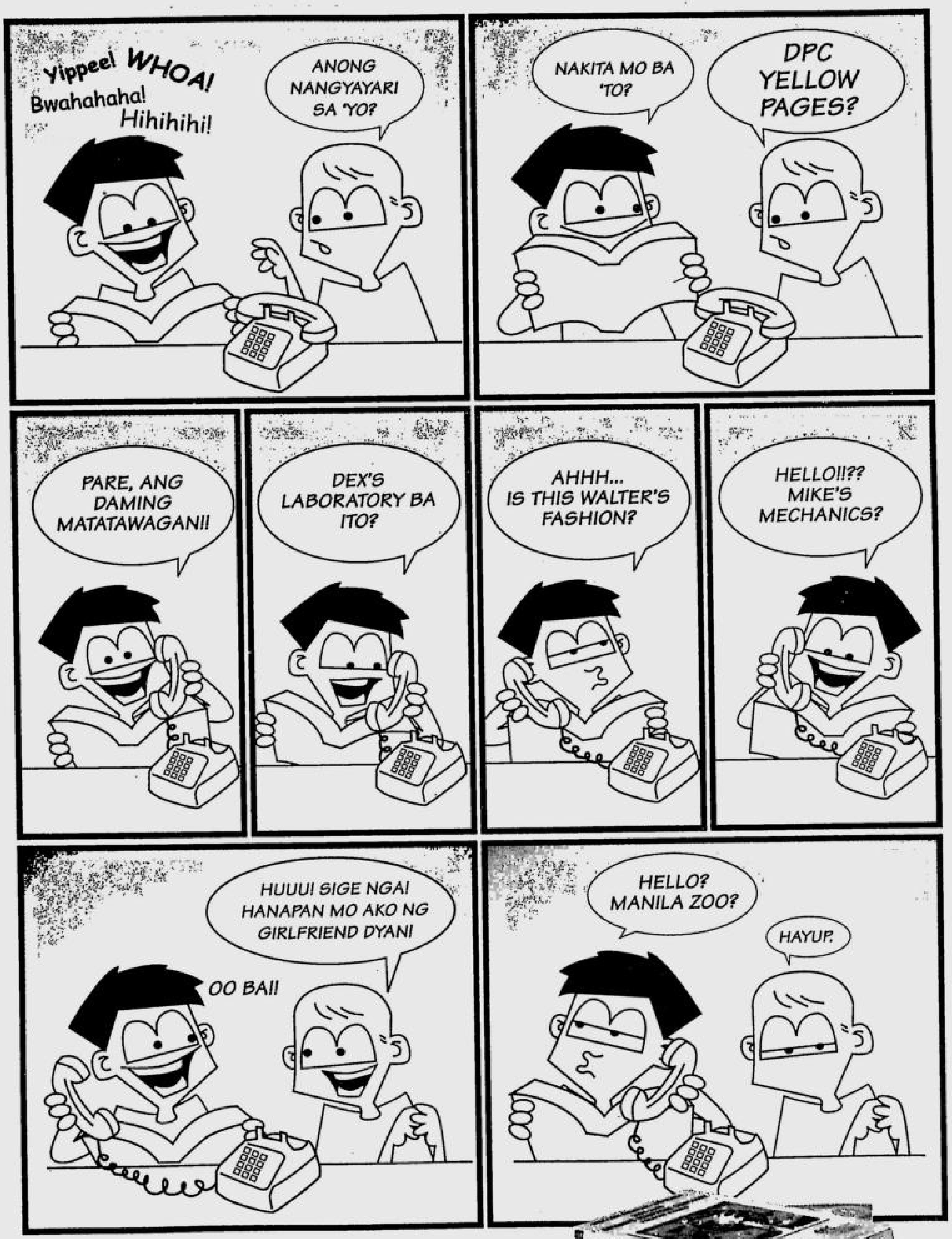
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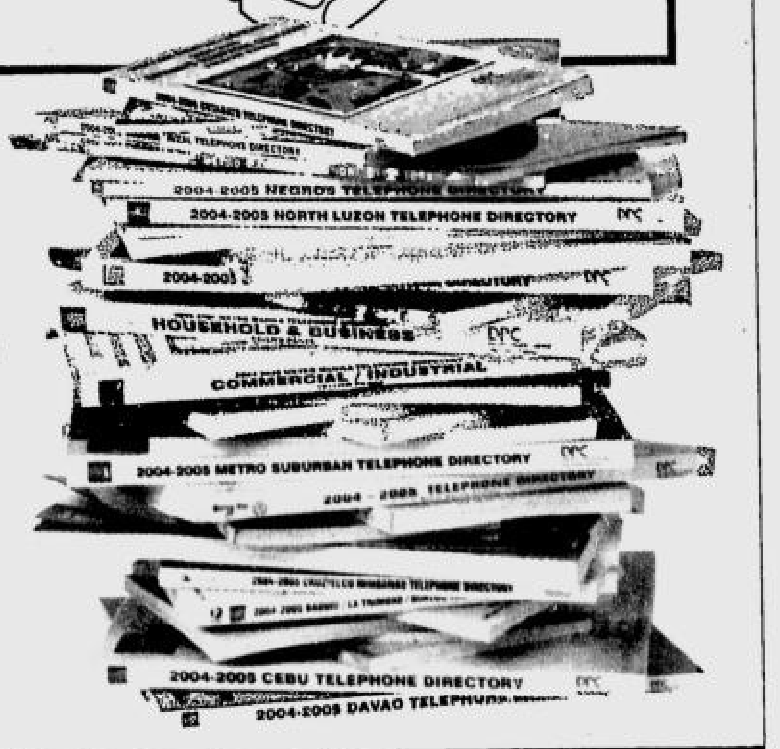
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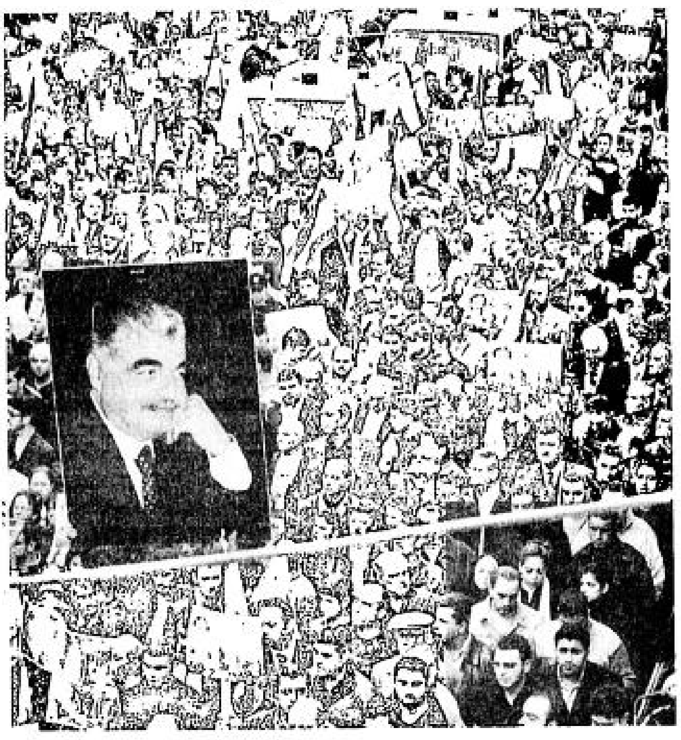
The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Int'l pressure mounts vs Lebanon, Syria



THOUSANDS of supporters of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri walk during his funeral procession in Beirut, Lebanon Wednesday. AP

BEIRUT—International pressure mounted against Lebanon to find the killers of ex-premier Rafik Hariri as this shocked nation prepared for Wednesday's burial of the man credited for rebuilding post-civil war Lebanon and seen as quietly opposing Syrian influence in his country's affairs.

A huge security operation has been organized for Hariri's funeral service, which will start at his palatial Koreitem compound in a posh Beirut neighborhood and wind for about 3 km through the capital to his burial place at the towering Mohammed al-Amin mosque, the construction of which has been funded by the billionaire.

Early Wednesday, Hariri's casket, draped in a red, white and green Lebanese flag, was moved to his home in a convoy of ambulances from the American University Hospital, where his body was initially taken following Monday's huge car bombing that killed him and 16 others.

More than 50 grieving close supporters, bodyguards and relatives, including one of Hariri's sons, Saadeddine, carried his casket into his residence chanting the Arabic words for "there is no God but God," before a Sunni Muslim cleric began readings from the Islamic holy book, the Quran.

Several of his six daughters and sons surrounded his coffin, weeping openly and holding each other.

Police and troops deployed in large numbers outside his home, along the route of the procession and in downtown Beirut as security forces blocked off streets in the capital ahead of the funeral procession.

Tens of thousands of mourners are expected to attend the service which Hariri's political supporters and family have warned government officials not to attend. The funeral follows massive street demonstrations in Beirut on Tuesday and clashes between dozens of Hariri supporters and Syrian workers in the slain tycoon's home town of Sidon, southern Lebanon, that left five Syrians with minor injuries.

Many in Lebanon are blaming Syria for carrying out—or at least having a hand—in the bombing that killed Hariri, the man who was this country's prime minister for 10 of 14 years following the 1990 end of the 15-year civil war. Syria denies the charge and has instead condemned the assassination.

Hariri resigned last year after opposing a Syrian-backed constitutional amendment that enabled his rival, the pro-Damascus Emile Lahoud, to extend his term as Lebanon's president.

An official from Lahoud's office, speaking on condition of anonymity, said late Tuesday that no decision had been made on whether Lahoud would attend the service.

Washington announced it was recalling its ambassador from Syria amid speculation that Damascus—which the United States has long criticized for exerting too much control over Lebanon—had a hand in Hariri's killing.

The UN Security Council approved a statement calling on the Lebanese government "to bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of this heinous terrorist act." Lebanon's interior minister suggested a suicide bomber aided by "international parties" may have been behind it.

Asked by reporters the reason for the assassination, Hariri's son, Saadeddine, replied in his first public comment: "It's obvious. Isn't it?" in an apparent reference to Syria, which has denied any involvement and has condemned the attack.

Syria deployed its forces to Lebanon during the 1975-90 civil war to stop the country from falling apart, but remained following the end of the conflict. Its continued presence is a source of frustration for many Lebanese, who oppose Syrian interference in their country's affairs, and for the international community, particularly Washington.

The Bush administration renewed calls on Damascus to withdraw its soldiers based in Lebanon in the latest spike in US-Syrian tensions. Washington has long accused Syria of supporting anti-Israeli militants and insurgents attacking US-led coalition forces in Iraq. Syria has denied the charges. *AP*

Al-Qaida capable of 'devastating attack,' says UN

UNITED NATIONS—A UN team investigating compliance with sanctions against al-Qaida and the Taliban predicted that brutal attacks by Osama bin Laden's followers will escalate as they still have easy access to bombmaking materials and money.

Terror attacks sponsored by al-Qaida and weapons of mass destruction are among the chief threats confronting the world, according to the team's report to a UN Security Council committee monitoring sanctions against al-Qaida and the Taliban.

Al-Qaida remains capable of mounting "devastating attacks" and sanctions are only having a limited effect on the group, which is still keen to acquire chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons, a UN report said Tuesday.

It is only "a matter of time" before a successful attack occurs, the report said.

UN sanctions require all 191 UN member states to impose a travel ban and arms embargo against a list of those linked to Bin Laden's terror network and the former Afghan rulers and to freeze their financial assets. The list includes more than 430 individuals and groups.

The semiannual report, which will be considered by the full Security Council at a later stage, painted a grim picture of a terror group determined to spread its influence, constantly evolving to evade detection.

"The biggest fear we all have is terrorists getting hold of the means to cause a mass attack," said Richard Barrett, the team's coordinator. "Al-Qaida is a phenomenon that observes no borders. It is even harder to track now than it was a year or two ago when it had a more coherent structure and leadership."

He added that he did not think al-Qaida was likely to obtain an entire bomb, but rather components of weapons of mass destruction, for example, toxic or radioactive material.

Despite steps taken by UN member states to impose military-style weapon embargoes, attacks with small arms and explosives have continued, the team said.

It said measures should be taken to counter the threat of portable anti-aircraft missile systems and materials that can be turned into explosives.

Financial sanctions, such as an assets freeze, may be the most effective way to stop large-scale terrorist operations, and many countries had implemented banking reforms to stop terror groups from moving money around, the report said.

"But there are many unofficial ways available to circumvent these restrictions," it added.

The team also said a travel ban imposed on people listed as being members of the Taliban and al-Qaida or their associates should be tightened and it called on the United Nations to work with Interpol on problem areas like forged travel documents.

No member state reported a violation of the ban for the three years the sanctions had been in force, but it was "difficult to believe" no al-Qaida or Taliban member had crossed a national border, the report said.

Barrett said he did not know where Bin Laden was. But despite the lack of knowledge about the al-Qaida leader's whereabouts, the group he led continues to thrive.

"The team sees no let-up in the determination of al-Qaida, the Taliban and their associates to continue their campaign of terror," the report said, warning of "a further escalation in terms of brutality of attacks." *AP*

MURUGUPILLAI Jeyarajah and his wife Jenita, parents of Abilass or "Baby 81," participate in a religious Hindu ceremony after making a final court appearance in Kalmunai, Sri Lanka. REUTERS

Tsunami baby finally reunited with parents

KALMUNAI, Sri Lanka—A baby found covered in mud after the tsunamis smashed into Sri Lanka's shores seven weeks ago was reunited with his parents at a courthouse here Wednesday, sparking celebrations in this remote town.

Friends and relatives mobbed Junita and Murugpillai Jeyarajah as they left the district court here with their child, 4-month-old Abilash, and headed for a local Hindu temple to dash 200 coconuts to thank the gods.

The boy was rescued from under a pile of garbage by a neighbor following the Dec. 26 tsunami, and taken to the local hospital, where he was dubbed "baby 81" because he was the 81st patient admitted that day.

A judge ordered him reunited with his parents after DNA tests had proved their claim that the boy was theirs.

Local residents stopped the car carrying the happy family and hugged and kissed the baby, while bystanders clapped when they arrived at various temples to offer prayers.

The first stop was at a temple near the main hospital where Abilash was cared for.

"We are very happy, but at the same time feel sad that a lot of people were killed on that day," Murugpillai Jeyarajah said of the tsunamis that killed nearly 31,000 people and made a million homeless.

Murugpillai Jeyarajah, a barber, remained composed and observed two minutes' silence at the temple.

"I am very happy that we got our baby back safely, but I observed the silence for all the children killed on that day," the father said. "Our prayers are with those parents who lost their children and the children who lost parents."

The boy's mother shed tears of joy as she hugged the baby while relatives and friends scrambled to touch the child born Oct. 19 last year in the same hospital where he had been given police protection until being handed back to his parents Wednesday.

The child gained almost 1.5 kg during his seven-week stay in the Kalmunai hospital, a doctor said. *AFP*

Anglican rifts seen over Charles-Camilla wedding

THE CHURCH of England owes its creation to a royal spat over divorce and remarriage: Henry VIII's break with the Vatican after the pope's refusal to grant the monarch dispensation to wed his lover.

Now—nearly five centuries later—these same questions are pulling at Anglican unity over the planned marriage of Camilla Parker Bowles and Prince Charles, the first in line to inherit the throne and become titular head of the church.

Conservative groups complain the April 8 civil ceremony and post-vows service by the Archbishop of Canterbury—although fully legal—runs counter to Church of England traditions against divorce and will deepen rifts at a delicate time for the world's 77 million-strong Anglican Communion, which includes Episcopalians in the United States.

PRINCE CHARLES and Bowles

The church has been shaken by quandaries over doctrine and structure. Chief among them: whether to sanction the ordination of gay clergy, give blessings to same-sex unions and allow women priests to become bishops. Fresh debates are expected at a gathering of Anglican leaders in Northern Ireland beginning Monday.

The royal wedding plans add another point of friction, conservative leaders say.

"We know there's a head of steam to liberalize the church already," said George Curry, chair of the Church Society, a group of tradition-minded Anglican clergy and faithful in Britain. "There are theological questions at stake. Charles is now one of them."

Actually, it's the bride-to-be who appears to be deeper into the religious quagmire.

Her ex-husband, Andrew Parker Bowles, is alive. For some conservatives, this is more an affront to Anglican tenets than the decision by the widower Charles to remarry.

"The question is, 'Is this the couple we want as the future guardians of the church?'" said Curry. "This is not setting a good example."

A statement from another conservative group, the Evangelical Alliance, applauded plans to give the relationship "a more moral footing." But it noted broad reservations persist.

"We acknowledge that the couple's previous divorces, their documented adultery and the nature of their extramarital relationship up to this point do present difficulties for many of our Anglican members and others with respect to Charles' suitability to govern the Church of England," said a statement from the London-based alliance, which claims 1 million members.

The Church of England disapproves of the remarriage of divorced people in church except under special circumstances. There are no annulments—as possible with Roman Catholics—that open the way for a new, church-sanctioned wedding. *AP*

Jackson rushed to hospital for flu

SANTA MARIA, California—Pop legend Michael Jackson was rushed to a California hospital Tuesday after being struck down by flu on his way to his child molestation trial, delaying the case for a week.

The dramatic twist came after the 46-year-old "King of Pop" began vomiting while being driven to court, where lawyers were to question prospective jurors who could send him to jail for 20 years.

Jackson was taken to the emergency room of the Marian Medical Center in the Californian town of Santa Maria, where he was put on an intravenous drip and treated for a "flu-like illness," doctors said.

His younger brother, Randy Jackson, rushed to his side, saying the pop superstar had been ill since the weekend and was expected to spend the night in the hospital.

JACKSON

"His spirits are fine. We expect him to stay overnight," Randy Jackson, [illegible] told reporters outside the hospital, just a few kilometers from the courtroom where he is on trial on charges he sexually abused a 13-year-old boy.

"He's actually been sick since the weekend. I saw him then and told him not to come to court, but he insisted on being in court Monday," the star's brother said.

Jackson had appeared in court Monday, on the third week of his trial, looking dapper, smiling and waving to fans as he arrived and left.

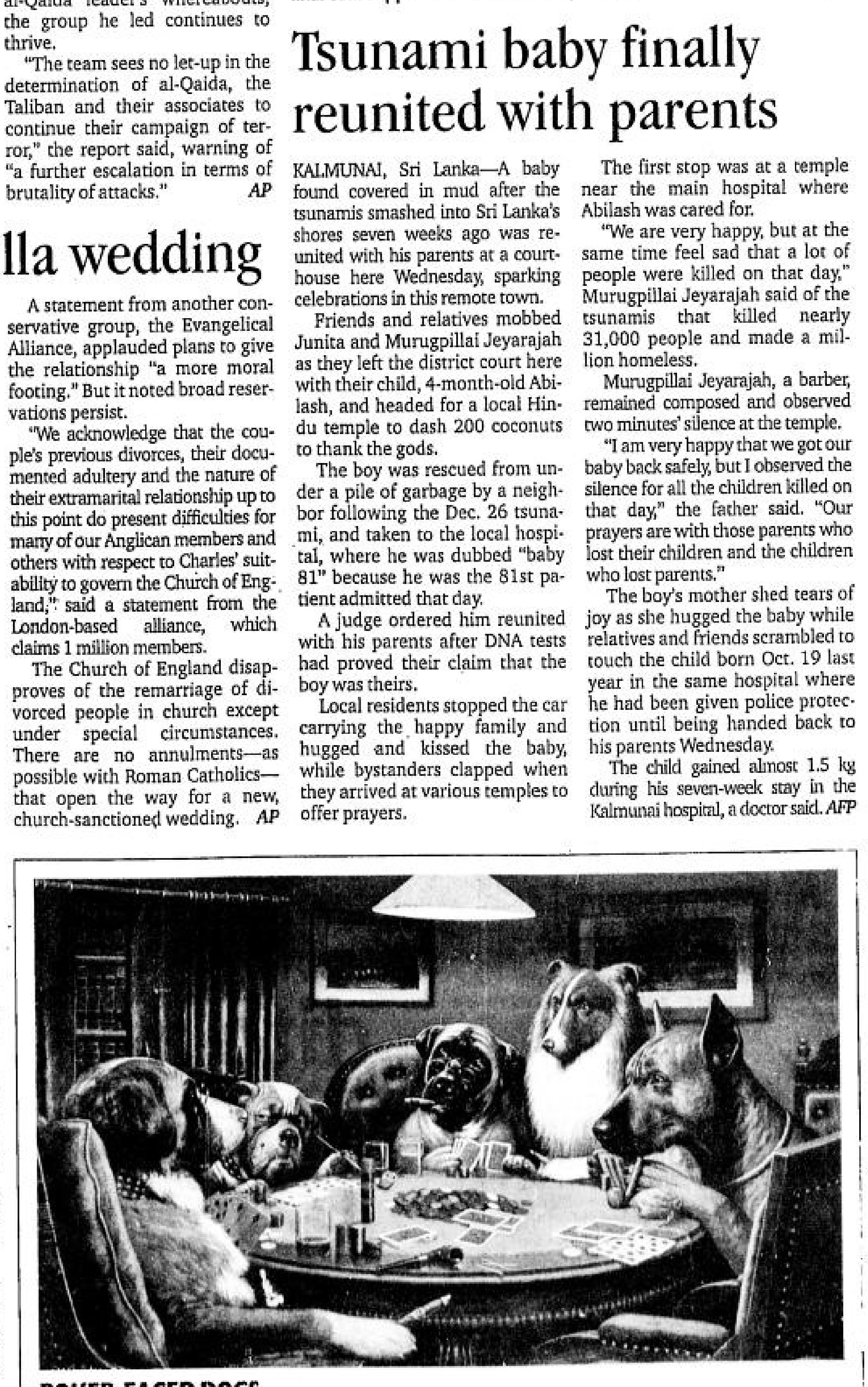
Judge Rodney Melville learned of Jackson's plight Tuesday morning during a phone call with a doctor treating the star.

Noting that several potential jurors had been struck down by a similar bug, Melville adjourned the trial until next Tuesday, telling panelists it would take "three to four days" for the singer to recover.

"We cannot proceed without him. That is not an option," the judge told the more than 100 potential prospective jurors.

It was the second delay in the proceedings, after all but one hour of hearings were canceled last week because of a death in the family of Jackson's lead lawyer Thomas Mesereau.

Outside the hospital, dozens of journalists and a small knot of loyal fans waited for news of the faded pop star. *AFP*



POKER-FACED DOGS

In this photo released by Doyle New York, a photograph of the painting "A Bold Bluff," by artist Cassius Marcellus Coolidge, is shown Tuesday in New York. A pair of paintings from the famed series depicting dogs playing poker sold for $590,400 at auction on Tuesday. AP

Global pact to cut gas emissions takes effect

KYOTO—The Kyoto Protocol, the landmark treaty requiring cuts in gas emissions which cause global warming, took effect Wednesday with the support of 141 nations but a boycott by the biggest polluter the United States.

The 34 industrialized countries which have ratified the treaty are legally bound to slash output of greenhouse gases by 5.2 percent before 2012, with targets set for each nation based on their 1990 levels.

The treaty was reached in this ancient Japanese capital in 1997 amid fear that the rise in global temperatures could eventually lead to droughts and the extinction of some species.

"We sincerely welcome that the framework in which the world will cooperate to stop global warming has finally come into effect," Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said.

The United States pulled out of Kyoto in 2001 in one of President George W. Bush's first acts in office, saying it would hurt the US economy.

The United States and Australia, the only other major industrial country to reject the treaty, account together for 30 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

The Bush administration points out that developing countries such as China and India have no obligations under Kyoto, meaning that their growing economies would not face the same economic burden as the United States.

China, with growth close to double digits, is by some forecasts expected to exceed the United States as the world's top polluter by 2020. Developing countries will be asked to make commitments in the next phase of Kyoto negotiations to begin later this year.

More than 300 environmental activists marched through Kyoto under persistent rain to celebrate the start of the pact despite years of doubt, with some dressed as monkeys or penguins or wearing mock tiger ears to highlight global warming's impact on animals.

"Skiing and snowboarding in danger!" read one banner held up by demonstrators who marched to the sound of African drums.

"Bush should listen to Earth, not to his businesspeople," said Deborah Mantle, a 36-year-old Briton who teaches English in Kyoto.

The United States and Australia were on the defensive before Kyoto took effect, insisting that they rejected the treaty for legitimate reasons and were committed to reducing pollution.

"Until such times as the major polluters of the world, including the United States and China, are made part of the Kyoto regime it is next to useless and indeed harmful for a country such as Australia to sign up for the Kyoto Protocol," Prime Minister John Howard told parliament.

White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan said the Bush administration has "made an unprecedented commitment to reduce the growth of greenhouse gas emissions in a way that continues to grow our economy.

"There's a lot that we are still learning about the science of climate change, but this administration is working to advance that science and to learn more about climate change itself and its effect on the world," he said.

But the Bush administration's view on global warming is disputed by most of the scientific community which believes pollution can in time shrink polar ice gaps and melt alpine glaciers.

The world's average temperature rose by 0.6 C from 1900-1990 alone, and could increase by another 5.8 C by 2100, depending on how much carbon dioxide is in the air, according to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The golden toad *(bufo periglenes)*, a colorful amphibian which made its home in Costa Rica, is believed to be the first species to have gone extinct because of greenhouse gases.

The World Wildlife Fund says polar bears could be wiped out in just over 20 years due to global warming. To highlight the point, five Japanese activists dressed as the bears held a rally Wednesday in central Tokyo.

But even for countries that have signed on to Kyoto, meeting the goals could be difficult. Failure would mean a country would have even tougher pollution cut requirements at a later date.

Koizumi said "it is not easy" to meet the Kyoto guidelines in Japan, where a trade ministry survey has found that 11 out of 30 industry sectors could fail to meet self-imposed targets. *AFP*

MEMBERS of the Landless Movement follow along an Amazonian trail the coffin of US missionary Dorothy Stang. AFP

Thousands mourn slain US nun protecting Amazon

ANAPU, Brazil—Thousands of people, from peasants to politicians, converged on this remote Amazon town to bury the bullet-riddled body of an elderly American nun killed in the struggle to protect the Amazon rain forest and its poor residents from encroaching loggers and ranchers.

After an all-night vigil, mourners on Tuesday filed slowly past the simple, flag-draped coffin holding the remains of Dorothy Stang in the small shingle-roofed church of Anapu, the jungle town of 7,000 residents that Stang adopted as her own.

Some held up a handkerchief stained with Stang's blood, her cloth shoulder bag, or saplings to symbolize the jungle she died defending. A crowd followed her coffin down a dirt road to the graveyard, singing in Portuguese: "They killed one more sister, but she will rise again. The people will not forget."

"I feel like a river without water, a forest without trees. It's like losing a mother," said Fernando Anjos da Silva. The settler said Stang helped him get medical treatment after a logging accident that left him wheelchair-bound.

Nearly 1,500 km to the southeast in the capital of Brasilia, Cabinet ministers compared Stang, 73, to Chico Mendes, the celebrated defender of the rain forest who was gunned down in 1988.

"Chico died for the same reason, killed by people with no respect for life or the law," said Environment Minister Marina Silva, who once worked with Mendes.

Meanwhile, rural violence in the state of Para, where Anapu is located, on Tuesday claimed another victim 340 km away in the city of Paraupebas.

As mourners were paying their last respects to Stang, two assailants gunned down Daniel Soares da Costa, the former president of that city's Rural Workers Union.

The Federal Human Rights Office said he was shot six times as he was heading to his home in the Carlos Fonseca settlement.

Police said they did not know if there was any connection between Stang's and Costa's deaths.

Brazilians have tried for centuries to conquer the Amazon, which covers more half the country. But the jungle frustrated ventures even by Henry Ford and German billionaire Daniel Ludwig, and some Brazilians call it "the green hell."

As mourners were paying their last respects to Stang, two assailants on Tuesday gunned down the former president of the Rural Workers Union of the city of Paraupebas some 340 km southeast of Anapu. *AP*

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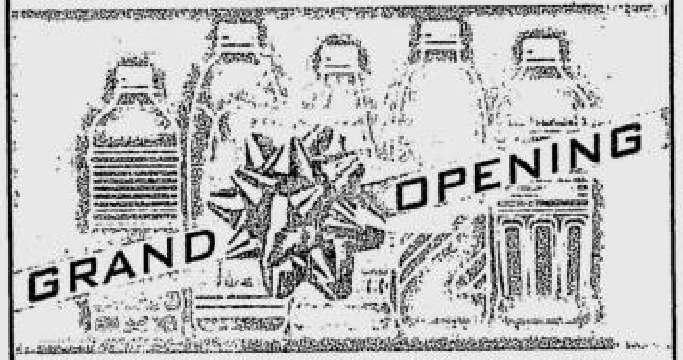

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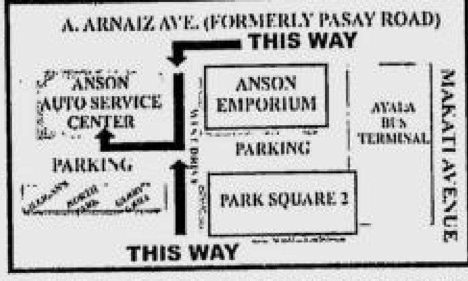

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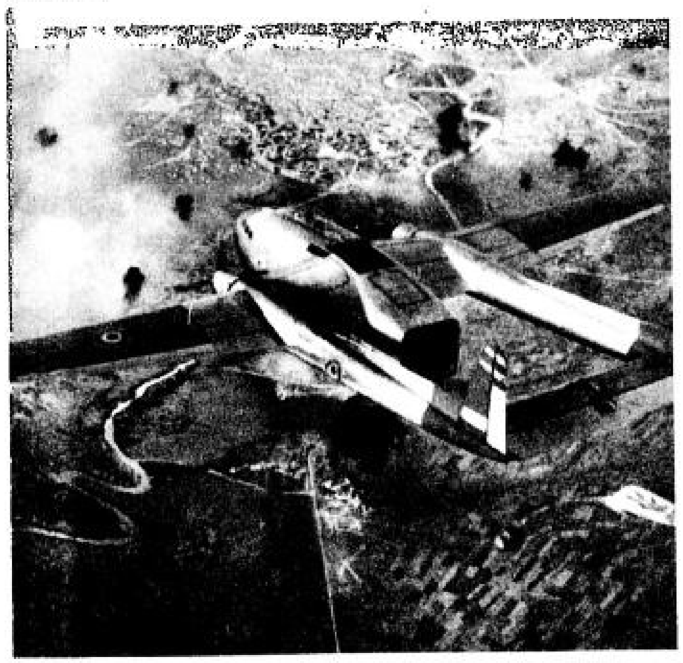


IN THIS painting provided by artist Jeff Bass shows a C-119 "Flying Boxcar," commissioned by the Fairchild Corp., to commemorate the role of CIA-sponsored civilian pilots in resupplying besieged French forces at Dien Bien Phu in the spring of 1954. AP

Shiite Jaafari leads race for Iraqi PM

BAGHDAD—An Islamist Shiite politician and former exile emerged as the front-runner to become Iraq's new prime minister on Tuesday as horse-trading to decide the line-up of the next government entered the final stages.

Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a physician and father of five, is head of the Dawa Party, one of two leading religious parties in the United Iraqi Alliance, the Shiite-led group which won 48 percent of the vote in elections on Jan. 30.

"The competition is still fierce but it appears so far that Jaafari will be the United Iraqi Alliance candidate because Dawa is insisting on him," a senior Shiite source said.

The diplomatic and soft-spoken 58-year-old, who holds the largely ceremonial role of vice president in the current interim government, fled Iraq in 1980 after thousands of Dawa members were murdered by Saddam Hussein. His family remains in London.

While the alliance did not win the 60 percent it hoped for, the vote puts the coalition in a commanding position to take the top job in the next government. A two-thirds majority is needed in the newly elected National Assembly to form a government.

Shiites, long oppressed under Saddam Hussein, have gained unprecedented power while minority Sunni Muslims once privileged under the former Iraqi leader have been marginalized after boycotting the polls due to fears of violence.

Shiite leaders have said the frustrated Sunnis would play a role in postwar Iraqi politics.

"There are two main things that must happen to ensure the continuity of the political process. First, there should be a clear vision and insistence that all Iraqi factions take part in the political process with deeds, not only words," said Interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, a secular Shiite.

"Second is to have a dialogue, a real one, for writing the constitution. If we manage to make this balance then this is the fruit we will get from the elections," he said in an interview at his headquarters in Baghdad on Tuesday.

"I am satisfied with the results because it is clearly the decision of the Iraqi people. Its decision is to support the Islamic factions... this is democracy," he said.

The Shiite alliance, formed with the backing of top Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, is headed by Dawa and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), both of which opposed Saddam Hussein from exile in Iran.

The source said SCIRI, led by Abdel-Aziz al-Hakim, had agreed to support Jaafari and withdraw its candidate, Finance Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi, "to preserve the unity of the alliance," which some had feared could collapse after the vote.

He said a final deal was unlikely on Tuesday, with many more details on who gets which jobs still to be worked out.

Analysts expect the Kurds, who took 25 percent of the vote, to play a key role in the talks as Iraqis look toward a reduction and eventual withdrawal of US troops.

The Kurds' powerful showing puts them in a kingmaker role—if they combine forces with the Shiite alliance, the pair would have more than two-thirds in the assembly and would be able to decide between them who takes what job, including ministries. *Reuters*

Covert US pilots get French award for heroism in epic Asian battle

WASHINGTON—In the spring of 1954, Allen L. Pope risked life and limb to fly covert Central Intelligence Agency resupply missions to besieged French forces in what is now Vietnam. But the thing he recounts most vividly is not the dangers he faced. It's the heroism of the French troops he was helping.

"This is what I'll always remember: the way they fought. There were men without hands, men without legs, men without feet, men that were blinded," he says. "They were catching hell."

They caught it at Dien Bien Phu, a cluster of villages in a valley ringed by mountains near the Laotian border. Communist rebels on higher ground pummeled the French with artillery in an epic battle that marked the end of French colonial rule in Indochina and foreshadowed the US involvement in Vietnam.

Next week, nearly 51 years after the fall of Dien Bien Phu, the seven surviving American pilots who braved those perilous skies—but later were essentially disowned by the CIA—will be awarded the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur, or Legion of Honor, France's highest award for service.

Six of the seven will gather at the official residence of French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte for a Feb. 24 ceremony to commemorate an important chapter in the history of US-French relations.

"It's a nice gesture on their part," says Douglas R. Price, who was 29 years old when he flew 39 airdrop missions to Dien Bien Phu in April and May 1954 as a civilian employee of Civil Air Transport, a flying service whose undeclared owner was the CIA.

"There has been a lot of friction between the (US and French) governments lately," he said, alluding to the leading role France played in opposing the Bush administration's decision to go to war in Iraq. "Maybe they're making a gesture, hoping that they can get things back together again."

The gesture will exceed any public thanks these now-elderly Americans have received from their own government, which sent them into harm's way in unarmed C-119 "Flying Boxcar" cargo planes with the understanding that if captured or killed they would not be acknowledged as agents of the US government.

"I was a covert employee. We were expendable," says Roy F. Watts. He unsuccessfully sued the government for extended disability and retirement benefits based on his 16 years of flying covert missions in Asia for the CIA. *AP*

Man pleads innocent for train wreck deaths

LOS ANGELES—A California man whose abandoned suicide bid was blamed for a fatal commuter train wreck last month pleaded innocent on Tuesday to 11 counts of murder.

Juan Manuel Alvarez, 26, could face the death penalty over the Jan. 26 crash which killed 11 people and injured about 200 in the deadliest train crash in the United States since 1999.

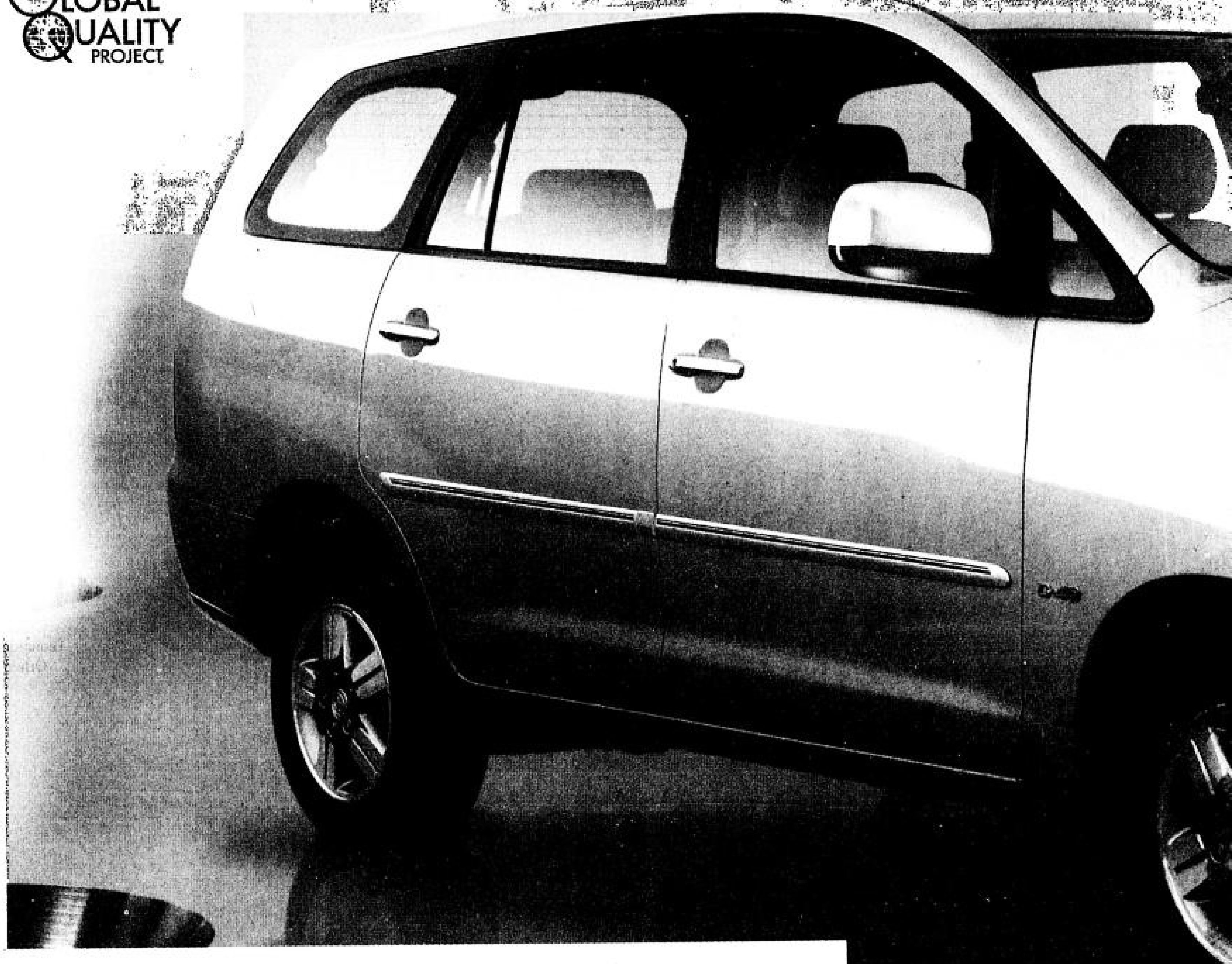
Prosecutors have reserved the right to ask for the death penalty but have not yet decided whether to do so.

Alvarez made a first court appearance two days after the crash but his arraignment was postponed until Tuesday, partly because of what his lawyer termed a "lynch mob mentality" immediately after the collision.

Lawyer Eric Chase said that Alvarez, apparently despondent over the break-up of his marriage, had doused himself with gasoline in an apparent attempt to take his own life shortly before driving his car onto rail tracks north of the Los Angeles downtown area.

Police said he bolted from the vehicle moments before an oncoming train hit the car, derailed and hit a train traveling in the opposite direction. He was arrested hours after the collision with what authorities described as self-inflicted injuries to his chest and wrists and was kept on suicide watch.

Chase said Alvarez had been hearing voices in the days before the collision and was suffering from an untreated mental illness. Police have described him as cooperative and remorseful. *Reuters*



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Death toll in China mine blast hits 209

BEIJING—The death toll from a New Year coal mine explosion in northeast China has risen to 209, state media said on Wednesday, with no end in sight to a grim accident tally in the world's most dangerous mining industry.

The death rate in Chinese mines is 100 times that in US pits and Monday's blast was the worst in China for 63 years.

The explosion, which rocked the Sunjiawan colliery of the state-owned Fuxin Coal Industry Group in the rust-belt province of Liaoning, happened 10 minutes after an earthquake, the English-language China Daily said.

However, the Xinhua news agency said the earth movement was a "mine tremor." It did not elaborate.

The State Administration of Work Safety planned to carry out a nationwide check on coal mines with a high density of gas, state media said.

However, illegal mines are routinely shut down in sweeps after major accidents, some only to reopen once inspectors have left.

A total of 209 people were killed at Sunjiawan and a rescue team of 180 was working to free six trapped workers, Xinhua said.

About 330 miners escaped, while 28 suffered burns, fractures or chemical poisoning and were rushed to hospital, media said.

The government would pay compensation to families of victims to "ensure stability of the region," the China Daily said.

The cause of the explosion was still under investigation.

But the China Daily quoted Zhang Yunfu, vice general manager of the Fuxin Coal Industry Group, as saying the explosion occurred 242 meters underground about 10 minutes after the tremor.

The accident happened on the penultimate day of the week-long Lunar New Year holiday when the vast majority of workers are at home with their families.

The mine employed 3,100 people and is designed to produce up to 1.5 million tons of coal a year.

China's mining industry is the world's biggest and the main source of fuel for the world's seventh-biggest economy.

Last month, Premier Wen Jiabao signaled the leadership's determination to tackle mine safety when he toured a coal mine in northwestern Shaanxi province where 166 workers died in November in the previous single deadliest accident since 1990.

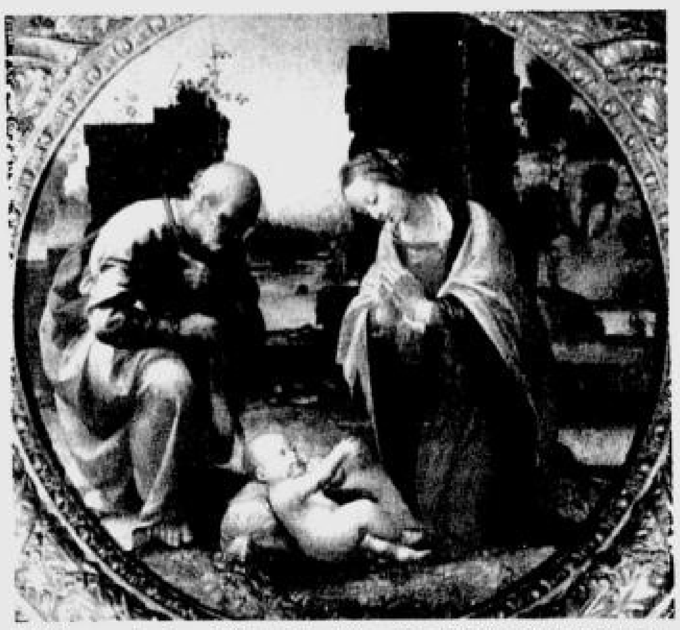
Wen, who along with President Hu Jintao has tried to cultivate a leadership style that is closer to the people, even ventured 1,300 meters down one pit where he shook hands with miners and shared a simple lunch.

China last year produced 35 percent of the world's coal but reported 80 percent of global deaths in colliery accidents at a rate of three fatalities per million tons of coal.

More than 5,000 people died in mining accidents in China last year.

The average Chinese miner produced 321 tons of coal—just 2.2 percent of what a miner in the more mechanized United States produced and 8.1 percent of what a South African miner produces.

The government has struggled to regulate thousands of small mines, but the chronic energy shortage and the lure of profits has led many mine operators to ignore orders to close dangerous pits. *Reuters*



THIS reproduction of "The Adoration of the Christ Child," believed to be attributed to Fra Bartolomeo, dates between the end of the 15th century and beginning of the 16th century. The artwork is at the center of a dispute involving is attribution: a centuries-old fingerprint fixed in the paint. AP

Fingerprints of Da Vinci found on masterpiece of Fra Bartolomeo

ROME—It's an artistic mystery involving fingerprints, Leonardo da Vinci and a disputed masterpiece that hangs in Rome.

The whodunit's about who did the work on "The Adoration of the Christ Child" attributed to Fra Bartolomeo in Rome's Galleria Borghese. Some of the illustrious names to come up through the centuries are Raphael, Ghirlandaio and Lorenzo di Credi, but scholars have never been sure.

A crucial clue—or perhaps a red herring—came during a recent restoration: a centuries-old fingerprint fixed in the paint. That, along with stylistic similarities, made scholars think of Leonardo—who sometimes left a digital imprint on his works as a kind of signature.

"Once it was restored, a kind of yellowish halo could be seen in the sky in the upper left," the chief restorer Elisabetta Zatti said Tuesday, describing the fingerprint she discovered on the painting Italians call the "Tondo"—or "Round"—after its circular shape.

Photos of the "Adoration" will be flown in March to Krakow, Poland, to compare its fingerprint, uncovered at the end of a yearlong restoration that ended in November, with the one on the Leonardo masterpiece "Lady with an Ermine."

Other hitherto hidden details of the painting were uncovered in the restoration, including typically Leonardesque symbolism like wild primrose, which represents resurrection, and the blue veronica flower, symbol of the eyes of the Virgin Mary.

Perhaps most strikingly, the restoration work revealed that the Virgin Mary had the large and somewhat masculine hands that are a hallmark of many female figures in Leonardo's work.

"There are many details that make one think of Leonardo, like the stylistic power, the technique of 'sfumato,' the virile hands, the eyelids, and the expressive intensity of Saint Joseph, as well as that it's a work full of symbolic meaning," Zatti said in a telephone interview.

Leonardo pioneered the technique called sfumato which gives outlines a hazy edge and can lend both dreaminess and sense of heightened realism to a work. Many artists copied the technique, but Leonardo's use of it was unique.

Zatti said that if the fingerprint turns out to be Leonardo's, the painting could probably be attributed to him.

"It's difficult to imagine he would have left it on the painting of someone else," she said. *AP*

Defrocked US priest jailed for raping boy

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—Defrocked priest Paul Shanley was sentenced to 12 to 15 years in prison on Tuesday for raping a boy in the 1980s in one of the most high-profile cases to stem from a US Catholic clergy abuse scandal.

During a sentencing hearing, Shanley's accuser, now a 27-year-old firefighter, described the convicted former priest as a "monster" and "the lowest of the low." Judge Stephen Neel ordered the 74-year-old Shanley to serve 12 to 15 years in prison, followed by a decade of probation.

There was scattered applause when the elderly Shanley was escorted from the packed courtroom in leg irons..

In sentencing Shanley, Neel said he had considered mitigating factors such as the lack of a criminal record and the numerous people who testified to his good work as a priest.

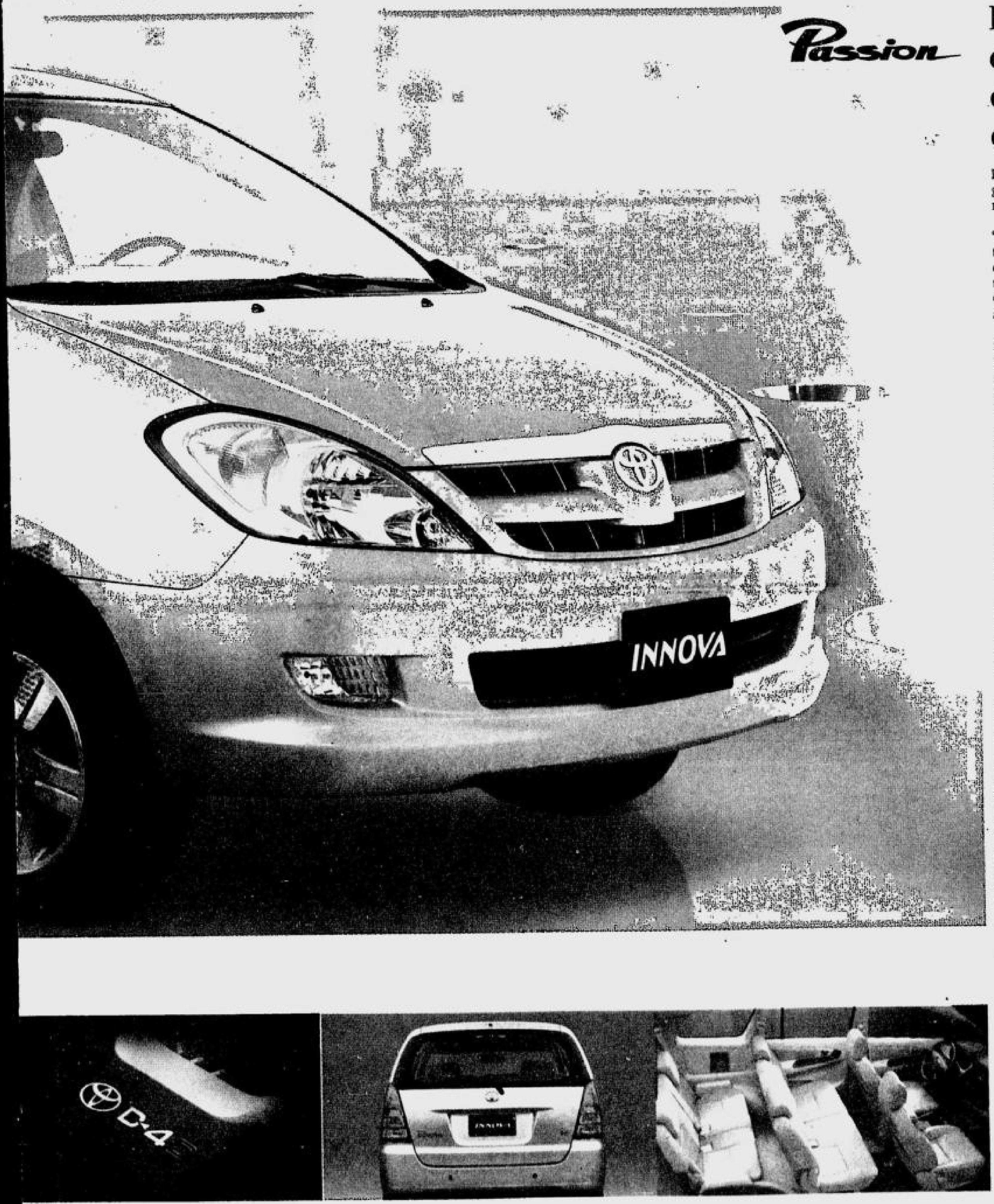
But he also noted that Shanley had used his role as a priest to facilitate his crimes.

"It is difficult to imagine a more egregious misuse of authority than that which occurred in this case," Neel said.

The offenses occurred when the boy was 6 to 12 years old.

Neel said Shanley would be eligible for parole after completing two-thirds of his sentence, but Frank Mondano, Shanley's defense attorney, said he was worried Shanley could die in prison "given his age and frailty."

He also expressed concern about his client's safety behind bars—especially after John Geoghan, another defrocked priest at the center of the clergy abuse scandal that rocked the Archdiocese of Boston, was slain in prison in 2003 by a fellow inmate. *Reuters*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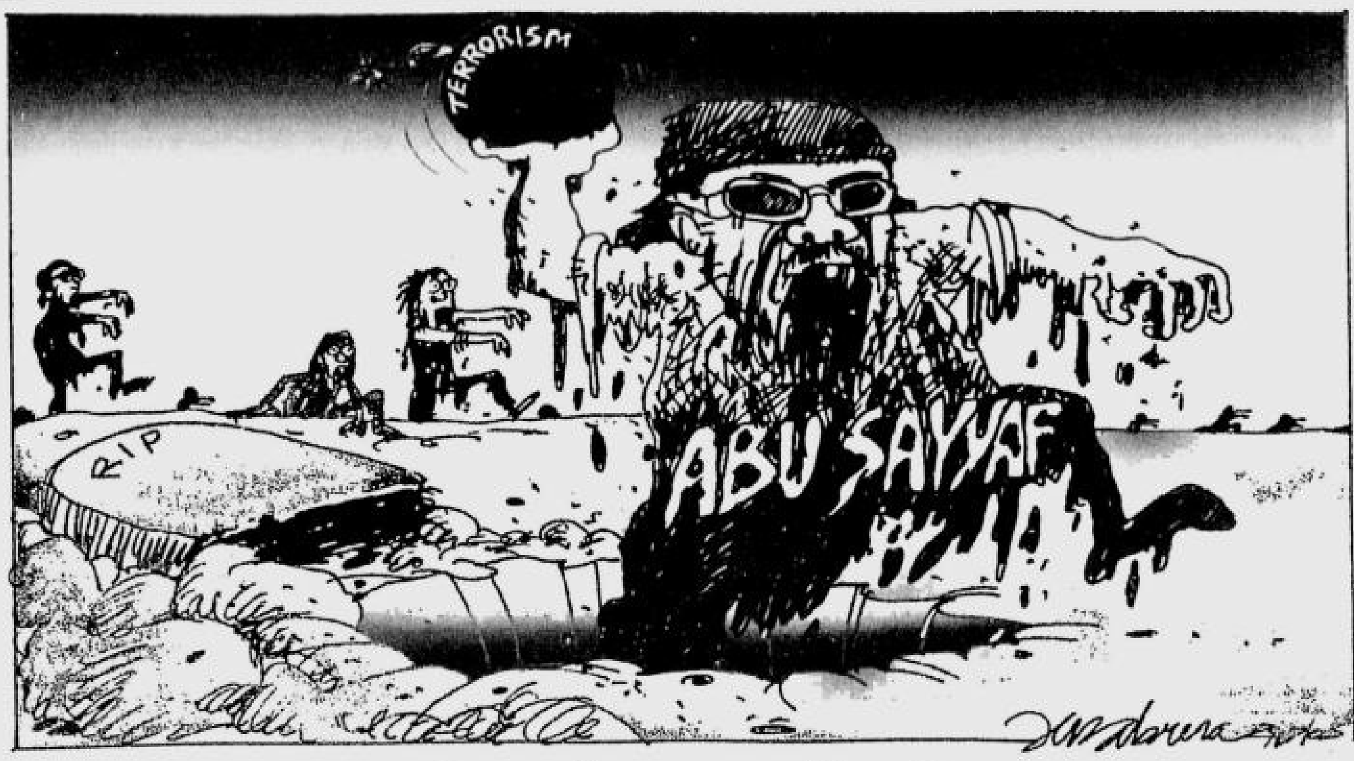

Wishful thinking

EDITORIAL

THE EYES of the world media were riveted in Rome over the last weeks, when Pope John Paul II was reported to be gravely ill from the flu. As things turned out, prompt medical attention resulted in the 82-year-old Pontiff recovering fairly quickly and well. Still, his most recent illness has led to a resumption of the debate over whether or not the Pope should resign.

There are historical precedents for a papal resignation, but the overwhelming example is of popes struggling on in their ministry until death claims them. No earthly power, in fact, can compel a pope to resign.

Over the past 20 years, as Pope John Paul II struggled with age and the effects of the assassination attempt on him and disease, there have been speculations that he himself was quietly preparing Catholic leaders for the possibility of his retirement. But the possibility of a papal retirement may actually be wishful thinking on the part of those who want it. John Paul II has never given any sign that he thinks retirement is an option. Rather, his infirmities and weakening health seem to be, for him, a chance to bear witness and to suffer for God.

The decision to remain in office may be easier for the Pope and the hierarchy to make, because John Paul II continues to have a clear mind, and a firm grasp of the pastoral and moral direction his pontificate aims to take. The present Pope has always been a profoundly pastoral, that is, teaching and guiding leader, rather than one interested in actual administration. He has always had a gift for delegating authority, which frees him up, in secular terms, to concentrate on policy.

Indeed, there is something inspirational about a man who simply refuses to surrender to age or infirmity. Each time age and health problems seem to catch up with him, the Pope bounces back, and increasingly, his recuperation is seen as a triumph of the will, and even prayer. The formerly vigorous Pontiff is now frail, but as his back has become increasingly bent, his moral messages seem to resonate even louder around the world.

It is clear that this Pope has restored vibrancy and strength to the conservative ranks of Catholicism. Some Catholics are, in fact, worried by the traditionalism of John Paul II. And yet, the last decades of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st have benefited from the uncompromising moral clarity of the leader of the Catholic Church. From his fight against Communism, his outspoken condemnation of abortion, his opposition to oppressive regimes and the imperialism of the West, his espousal of Third World debt reduction, he has remained consistently relevant in world and spiritual affairs.

Most of all, John Paul II has proven that the affairs of the spirit cannot be bound to the ways and means of the world of politicians and the secular life. A profound shift in emphasis from the pomp and glitter of the wealthy, comfortable lives of many Western Christians to the challenges and moral requirement of bearing witness to an authentic faith in the poor and violent developing world has taken place under his watch. This Pope still has much to teach the world. In his mind, and heart, too, it seems quite clear he believes he has much to suffer, endure and celebrate, as well.

A place in history

FOREIGN COMMENT

ALL of President George W. Bush's goals hinge on the outcome of the war in Iraq. To ensure his place in history, he should take a long hard look at reality.

Second-term US presidents are said to want to make sure their names go down in history. We believe this partly explains Bush's stated resolve to bring "democracy" to the Middle East.

Fixing Social Security is another major task. Bush's proposal to introduce "voluntary personal retirement accounts" to this 1930s system suggested his eagerness to stick to the neoconservative philosophy of small government. But no matter how much he may stress domestic reforms, their future will be affected by developments in Iraq.

The longer US troops remain, the more military expenditures will bloat, which in turn will effectively nullify Bush's pledge to slash the federal deficit by half during his presidency.

Bush's words are lofty when he voices his ideals, but the realization of these ideals depends on whether he can properly conclude and reach a settlement in the Iraq war, which he initiated.

Asahi Shimbun (Tokyo)

Can of worms No. 3

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

TOURISM Secretary Robert Ace Durano blabbed earlier that retired Air Force Gen. Adelberto Yap would oversee the country's second largest international airport. "He'll find," this column warned last Oct. 14, "a can of management worms waiting."

At Mactan-Cebu International Airport, the Commission on Audit reported that the "worms" included P1.41 billion in properties unlisted, P90.2 million in debts and reduced fees for coddled firms like Philippine Airlines and Waterfront for over a decade.

"Can of Worms 2, 3, 4, 5 Etc." debunked acting MCIAA manager Marcelino Cordova's claim that reforms were implemented. Garbled books and reform lags led the COA to exclude the airport and 13 other offices from its review of national agencies.

Instead, the airport cheekily urged the INQUIRER to prod the Bureau of Internal Revenue to rule if PAL is tax exempt.

"It's not a newspaper's job to wring decisions on airport taxes," we wrote then. The board's "refusal to do so, for over a decade, constitutes gross dereliction of duty. Others were cashiered for less."

Future cans of worms are in contracts, from the supply of X-ray machines to fire trucks. "Can of Worms No. 3," we said, "is an Ombudsman case over a partial P7.9 million runway, rejuvenation."

An "independent board" will name Yap manager tomorrow (Feb. 18), Sun-Star's Elias Baquero reports. The members of the board apparently have seen the letter stating: "It is the President's wish...."

No one will admit glimpsing a wink from the financiers of the 2004 presidential campaign. They're now recouping their donations from airport contracts. So, will Yap play ball with them?

Yap will find "Can of Worms No. 3" waiting. The no-nonsense Regional Ombudsman Virginia Palanca Santiago approved the filing of a criminal case for graft against the airport's former manager Angelo Verdan and engineer William Sabado.

While the board shilly-shallied, one member, Capt. Antonio Oppus, charged Verdan and Sabado for awarding 7HTechnochem Industries P7,470,476 in a rigged transaction to buy 14,534 gallons of sub-standard "rejuvenator."

Since then, the COA's Roy Ursal confirmed Oppus' assertion that Verdan excluded the awards and bids committee and instead ran a personal canvass. The MCIAA couldn't be bothered to reply to the COA.

Technochem's bid surfaced three months late and it was overpriced by P6 million, Ombudsman prober Ephemia Bacalso found. To favor a family corporation headed by Ronnie S. Tiu, the "project specifics" were watered-down three times. Except for Oppus, the board played along.

It did so again by swallowing retailored specifications, this time for a fire truck. Doctored "specs" enabled the MCIAA to buy a P32-million Oskosh fire truck last May.

There's "enough basis to proceed with a criminal investigation" on the fire-engine award, wrote Ombudsman's Edgardo Canton. The Ombudsman's can opener will see courts rule on questions that Oppus raised.

Like Yap, Oppus is a military fighter pilot. He moved on to fly 747s and is also an engineer. He serves on a board staffed with members of varying qualifications, from lawyers to a movie house operator, insurance peddler and political retreads.

The board minutes show where Oppus drew the line. "Effective immediately, I am inhibiting myself from any and all discussions regarding runway repair," he wrote the board chair, Undersecretary Edward Pangunsan, on July 1, 2003. "The whole episode is chaotic and graft ridden." Pangunsan didn't reply either.

That wasn't an overnight rejection. In August 2000, Japan Airport Consultants warned about "moderate to severe unraveling" of the runway. But for 21 months, the board sat on its hands—until the May 2002 meeting, when Oppus bluntly charged "gross incompetence for neglecting an airport's critical and primary facility: its runway."

From then on, a charade developed. Bids by reputable firms were shoved aside on the basis of an "unsigned white paper." In the interim, vital documents never showed up from response of shunted bidders, the memorandum of agreement between the airport and the Air Transport Office for repairs, the progress and evaluation reports to Technochem Industries' backdoor appearance, three months after the bidding closed.

The eroded runway drew complaints. "Our technical evaluation confirmed that (Mactan) is in an advanced state of deterioration," PAL's flight operations chief wrote in May 2002. A series of accidents since then underscored the warning. A PAL 737's tire exploded upon touchdown in August 2002. A Cebu Pacific DC-9's tires were ripped during a September 2003 landing. In February 2004, a Qatar jet had its tires zapped.

How good are the repairs? The over 2.27 million passengers, who stream through Mactan yearly, have no idea. Neither does the board. The acceptance document, sans technical report, for runway repair surfaced 62 days late. A disinterested board wasn't bothered that only "ocular inspections" preceded submission. "The roughness of the runway is dangerous to aircraft landings," says Capt. Amado Soliman, president of Air Safety Philippines.

"Can of Worms Nos. 3 and 4" are case studies, too. They show how an inept board, subservient to shadowy political and economic groups, toy with lives of people by converting a crucial airport into a jar, as the Filipino saying puts it, "to make *kupit*." That's a polite word for snitching in the millions.

When Yap assumes office before distinguished board members, no one will ask: Are your fingerprints, as former board member, also in the MCIAA deals?

As the old Spanish farmer said: "They're all honest men. But my cloak is not to be found."

* * *

E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Real needs

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

WHEN our son was still a child, my wife Tita took out a high school plan for him with Platinum Plans. We are not rich, and we were in especially bad shape then. We thought we would put our minds to rest on how to send him through school later on. The plan was small, insignificant even by the standards of the early 1990s, but it brought some psychological balm. No small thanks to the pat on the back you got from the company about doing well to secure your kid's future.

Years later, our kid and the plan matured—our kid enough to go to high school, the plan not nearly enough to pay for his school bus. Inflation and the runaway cost of education had flattened the plan to the ground like a tsunami a village by the sea. Still, money was money and last year, Tita went out to get what paltry sum was due us. She went to the Platinum Plans office in Buendia, a gleaming structure that spoke of bedrock stability. She was asked to come back in a month to claim her check. She did, braving the traffic to get to Makati (we live in Quezon City). The processing was fast, the check was postdated. All was right with the world.

Or so it seemed. Shortly after Tita deposited the check, she was notified by the bank that it had bounced. She chalked this up to an oversight of the company and braved the traffic again to go back to the gleaming, bedrock-stable, edifice on Buendia. This time a crowd milled at the office. Most of the other petitioners (for that was how they looked) had substantial policies, some P100,000 or more. Some had come from as far away as Tuguegarao and Bicol. All had the same problem: their checks had bounced.

Only minor clerks were there to face them. My wife asked for the manager, but no one seemed to know where he was. The customer relations officer materialized after Tita refused to get into a waiting game with them and complained loudly. The officer was not apologetic, he was indifferent. The only reason he entertained Tita was that she had made a fuss. He disappeared after they spoke, leaving the others to wait.

The company issued a check. Again, Tita deposited it. Again, it bounced. Again, she braved traffic to get to the gleaming bedrock-stable edifice. Again, a crowd was there with the complaint that their checks had bounced. Again, clerks were there but no one entertained questions. The claimants were now boiling with anger.

By dint of threatening to call the media there and then, Tita got an official to face them and explain how they stood. The fellow said the good news was that they would now be paid in cash. The bad news was that only some of them would get paid, specifically the ones with smaller claims. The rest had to come back some other day. Groans and moans and curses issued from the throats of the crowd, but short of burning the place down (which they all wanted to do; only the thought they might never recover their money for their children's college kept them from doing so), they felt powerless to do anything.

Tita did get our cash after some time, a very small amount that one could only want to go through all this for because of what it represented. (We don't know if the others have.)

Tita has asked me to write this for some time now, believing the others are still there gnashing their teeth, their minds filled alternately with thoughts of despair and murder. The recent hullabaloo over pre-need companies has given me added reason to do so.

I don't know that Platinum Plans is typical of pre-need companies. The torrent of complaints against College Assurance Plan, stemming from its inability to meet claims, suggests it is so. Indeed, I suspect the problem is more widespread than supposed. Some senators have already spoken out against CAP in particular, saying its figures clearly show it is not in any position to pay its planholders, now or in the foreseeable future. The problem isn't just that, it is their sheer lack of transparency, or indeed lack of manners.

I caught Perfecto Yasay on ANC last week accusing Senators Mar Roxas and Serge Osmeña of being reckless to have depicted CAP the way they did. It amounted to killing the company, he said, as it stood to stampede planholders into its doors. Indeed, it stood to sow public distrust over pre-need companies. Gene Orejana, who was interviewing him, was rightly unsympathetic. He wasn't a policy holder himself, Orejana said, he had heard enough bad press about them from the start to want to be so. His question was: What do you do about the people who feel cheated of their life savings?

It is a very good question, and one echoed by Roxas himself in Tina Monzon-Palma's show on the same topic. This is one time I agree with Roxas 100 percent. To begin with, he said, the plan already reeks of a rip-off. Only 40 percent of what you give to the pre-need companies actually goes to meet your children's future education, 60 percent goes to agents' fees and company expenses. Quite apart from that—and this is the part I agree with entirely—why is our perspective how to keep business protected? Why isn't our perspective how to protect the public?

It's the public that's completely exposed and vulnerable in all this, like nipa huts in a gathering storm. What this has spawned is an attitude from the companies that the public is there to be fleeced, there's precious little to prevent them from doing so, they can always buy their way out of a mess. Worse, what it has spawned is an attitude from the public of resignation, of looking to heaven and not to earth for justice or vengeance. This is one time I most assuredly approve of the latter. We do not have consumer rights in this country, and pre-need firms have merely served to drive home that fact.

That is what we need before anything else

Salapuddin gathers Muslim leaders

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

YESTERDAY the President was scheduled to visit Zamboanga City and Basilan, but her trip was canceled reportedly upon recommendation of Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza. Postponing the visit was a sensible decision, as there might be security factors that cannot be controlled. It's better to ensure her safety than to expose her to potentially dangerous situations. GMA has so many tough decisions to make and her personal security should be the least of her concerns now.

* * *

The big problems involve the handling of the ongoing military conflict in Sulu as well as the recent terrorist bombings in Makati, Davao and General Santos. There are various theories about these two incidents, and one question is whether there's a connection between them. Our lawmen are now looking into it and we hope they can solve the puzzle fast, as this could help them beef up security where it's most needed.

Frankly, I share the disbelief of Rep. Benasir Macarambon about the Abu Sayyaf owning responsibility for the bombings. Macarambon opined that the Abu Sayyaf is not that strong any more to launch such attacks. What seems to be gaining ground is the theory that there could be a third force out to sabotage the government in the light of a number of fortuitous developments. Among them are the Cabinet economic team's revamp that has met the approval of the business community, RP's removal from the list of countries being monitored for money laundering activities (which came ahead of the two-notch downgrade of RP's credit rating by Moody's Investor Services), and the moving of the peace process between the government and the MILF.

* * *

Yesterday I was able to catch on the cell phone Deputy Speaker for Mindanao Gerry Salapuddin of Basilan, who also chairs the Philippine Muslim Leaders' Forum (his co-chairs are ARMM Gov. Parouk Hussin and Rep. Simeon Datumanong of Maguindanao). He was in Basilan to prepare for GMA's visit, but when it was canceled, he made plans to fly back to Manila, so he could call a meeting of Muslim leaders to explore some "rational thinking" on the Sulu conflict and the terrorist bombings.

* * *

Salapuddin said he will convene the Mindanao Muslim leaders for a show of support for the administration and to convince it to call a meeting of top Muslim leaders, including the MNLF faction loyal to Misuari to discuss current developments. He said he broached the idea to Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who has been very much involved in the peace process with the MNLF and MILF. It's better if all of us, including the AFP and the DND, talk things out, he said.

What about GMA's statement about finishing off the rebel groups in the South? Salapuddin said this was understandable, as she has to project an image of strength. But he left unsaid what is in the minds of many people who have been observing the Mindanao problem for decades: that while the Abu Sayyaf bandit group ought to be exterminated once and for all, the problem with the MNLF and the MILF cannot be resolved solely by force of arms. At the height of the Mindanao conflict with the MNLF in the 1970s, President Marcos fielded 10 battalions but the conflict continued. President Ramos concluded a peace agreement with Misuari, which worked for some years, affording Mindanao unprecedented prosperity and development. But the process stalled, thanks to the misguided thinking of Misuari, who was perhaps corrupted by too much funding. Now there's Marcos' longtime defense secretary, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, opining that if the dissidents can't be wiped out for good, let's give them the island of Mindanao *na lang*. But then, the Christians now outnumber the Muslims there perhaps five to one, making that an impossibility.

* * *

I'm glad Salapuddin is taking the initiative in gathering the Muslim leaders, for now, more than ever, their input is badly needed to make sense of what's going on. It's interesting to note that the three top leaders of the RP Muslim Leaders' Forum, Salapuddin, Hussin and Datumanong, are all former MNLF commanders who have turned their backs on violent secessionism and are now in government, working to improve the lot of their people.

* * *

Salapuddin condemned the "senseless" bombings as a violation of Islam's sacred tenets, but he also lamented that the "explosive situation" in Sulu was triggered by a series of episodes, e.g., the human rights abuses by some military elements there, which Misuari loyalists and the Abu Sayyaf have exploited. For instance, he said, the current Sulu war was triggered by a conflict involving a barangay leader's wife. I asked Salapuddin if there is a connection between these loyalists and the bombings claimed by the Abu Sayyaf, and he said it's "not remote" that there could be a "tactical alliance" between them. After all, "*maraming magkamaganak sa mga factions na 'yan*, and some of them are involved in conflicts over property rights."

* * *

Salapuddin also said Misuari should be made to answer for inciting his followers to rebel against the government after the ARMM elections two years ago, which resulted in the death of more than 100 of them. But even as he stressed that the judicial process ought to be upheld for the former MNLF chair, who is now detained in a Laguna prison, Salapuddin said it should be "quickened" and resolved. This was echoed a few days ago by Governor Hussin, prompting the order from GMA to the justice department to move that case. Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez has discovered that the reason it has languished is that the judge assigned to it resigned many months ago and has not been replaced! He has petitioned the Supreme Court to name a replacement. With two top Muslim leaders now saying the same thing, that case ought to move faster!

Letter from the edge

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

HERE is a letter I received on Valentine's Day, from Good Shepherd Sisters who live and work both peacefully and dangerously among the *lumad* (indigenous people) of Agusan del Sur. Peacefully, because they have been accepted by the people, they have grown roots with them and their work of 26 years has borne abundant flower and fruit in the community. Dangerously, because the people and the nuns have to contend with the hazards of military presence and suspicion.

The Religious of the Good Shepherd-Tribal Filipino Ministry is flourishing in the municipality of San Luis. The place where the nuns run an "ecology and spirituality farm" is called Tuburan, which means spring, which means life in those parts, and could indeed be joyous and abundant if only…

Dear Ceres,

We wake up to the chirping of birds and the sound of pigs and chickens asking for their morning meal. There is a forest nearby, the reason perhaps why the horizon is always wrapped in mist at dawn. It is a little slice of heaven on earth. The Banwaons and the Monobos are a peace-loving people, very simple, honest and deeply connected to the earth. Their culture is rich in tradition and steeped in spirituality. We always get inspired when we join their rituals.

However they are very poor materially. Their ancestral domain, the forests of San Luis, are rich in natural resources but the people have been deprived of these natural wealth.

Our latest concern is Barangay Balit which has been occupied by the military since November last year. Balit is 7 km. from the town center and is quite accessible. Here we have established our tribal ministry and various programs and projects in education and farming. We have also started a small infirmary.

Our ministry is open and above ground for everyone to see. We've had so many visitors here—top government and church officials from here and abroad, benefactors, ambassadors and their wives, our own superiors in the congregation, the media. They appreciate and support what we do. Sad to say, it seems it is only the military here that are not happy with our mission. We and the people cannot understand.

At present, the 29th IB under Lt. Col. Johnny Macanas accuse the Balit community [of being] an NPA (New People's Army) barangay. We know that state security is the priority of the military so their job is to run after the enemies of the state, not after civilians. Balit is a registered barangay, its people are registered voters. The barangay officials have no criminal records.

In Sitio Minlinao, 14 people were given arms and made to surrender as rebels. They and their families were made to leave their homes and farms and resettle in a detachment at Km. 24. The children had to quit school. Two datus who were old and weak were listed as surrenderees. People say, "This is good business for money and promotion."

Last month, Macanas took 12 men from Balit to undergo Cafgu training. They were again tagged as rebel returnees even if they were never with the NPA. How sad that this is being done by those who call themselves Christians, are educated and supposed to serve the people. Luoy kaayo ang mga lumad. (What a pity for the lumad.)

The people have asked the military to pull out, that the military should

- stop living in civilian houses without the community's consent,
- stop cutting trees in private and titled lands (they never even ask permission),
- move their camp away from the Balit community and follow the law,
- stop their housing project. (They build without the consent of the barangay officials and the community.)

Are they not violating the people's rights? Military men continue to live in civilian houses they have built at the back of people's homes. Macanas said they have orders "from above."

A fact-finding mission in Balit headed by Fr. Bench Balsamo, MSC was conducted late last year and we are sending you the report. We have sent this to the civilian authorities but so far, no results. Last Dec. 27, the INQUIRER came out with a story (by Ma. Kristina E. Cassion) titled, "Army project sends villagers away on Xmas."

Through the housing project, the military has occupied the community. The soldiers, despite protests, put up a cooperative store. Nine stores closed shop.

Planting season is here but the lumad are afraid to go to their farms. They ask: "What does the military want from us and our territory?" Their past experiences tell them that after military operations, multi-national projects enter. The people are apprehensive. Four industrial tree plantations approved during the time of Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez are waiting to be started. You know, the forests here are still thick with trees and other vegetation.

Why are the Banwaon-Manobo communities always the target? One datu said, "If the military are after the rebels, they should look for them in the mountains and not in Balit." We, the Sisters are also being harassed and accused of many things but we do not want to focus on ourselves. We simply want to continue our work.

We have three main programs: education for children, sustainable agriculture for food and sufficiency, and health services. The people had asked for these and these are consistent with their efforts to develop and defend their ancestral domain. The right to till the land precedes the right to own.

We hold on together in times of crisis, when there are natural calamities and military operations. There have been threats to us and our staff teachers, agriculturists, health workers who have been with us for 10 to 16 years.

Our mission with the *lumad* is the mission of the Church. This mission is difficult but it is worth dying for.

Come and spend some time with us.
Your friends forever,
Good Shepherd Sisters
Kalilid Community

Celebration

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

CINCINNATI, Ohio—The Plum Street temple is a magnificent building, and yet what was remarkable about it on Feb. 13 was the way so many communities came together in celebration.

There were members of the local Jewish community, who worship in this temple on a regular basis. There were Jews from all parts of the United States, all of them bound by history to the Philippines, where they and their families found refuge from Hitler's persecution of their people. There were members of the Frieder family, also bound by ties of affection and commerce to the Philippines, and by ties of compassion to the families of refugees. And there were African American Christians, who were there to add to the luster of the ceremony with their songs. Finally, and not least, there were Filipinos, led by our ambassador to the United States, a tall, dapper, soft-spoken but distinguished man, his capable staff, and Filipino-Americans, some first-, others second-generation, a bit shy but awed by the outpouring of affection for our country.

The Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education of the Hebrew Union College Institute of Religion (the oldest Jewish college in the United States) had gathered descendants of the Frieder family, as well as the Jewish refugees, and we Filipinos, to pay tribute to the Frieders and the Philippines. It was a ceremony of great simplicity but the most touching affection. Most of all, it was a ceremony that, with its concentration on celebrating life, helped make the story of the Jewish refugees in the Philippines firmly part of a larger story. By telling the stories of the Frieder brothers' efforts, and the sympathetic Filipino response to their pleas for help, the ceremony helped remind everyone present that there simply is no excuse to turn a blind eye to persecution, racism and genocide.

Cincinnati has a place in the history books as the first stop in what came to be called the underground railroad. Located on the Ohio River, the city is just across from the border of Kentucky, which prior to the American Civil War was a slave-owning state. Opponents of slavery would smuggle slaves across the river to freedom in the northern, non slave-owning states. To this enlightened heritage should be added the manner in which the city also became a haven for Jews in North America, playing an important and vibrant role in the development of the Judeo-American community.

Our country occupies a special place in their hearts, because the Philippines was the only part of the world that cared to spare their lives

A final and long-unrecognized heritage is that represented by the Frieders, a local family, whose members were sympathetic to Philippine independence and befriended Filipinos, and who were confident the Philippines could play a small but distinguished role in standing up to Nazi aggression.

What touched me most was what the wife of one of the Jewish refugees told me one night. Pointing to her husband, Ralph Preiss, who had come to Manila as a young boy, she said that her husband is, by nature, a quiet, shy, unexpressive sort of man. And yet once, on a trip to the Philippines, she was struck by a transformation that took place. As their plane got closer and closer to Manila, she found her husband relaxing, cracking jokes, all smiles, talking to every Filipino on the plane. She asked him what was going on. He smiled, and told her, "You have to realize, these are my people. I'm one of them. Manila is home!"

This is a feeling that every Filipino knows, no matter what part of the world life has led them to eventually. A Filipino abroad may come home often, or hardly at all; but there comes a time when going back to the Philippines leads to smiling, relaxing, basking in the company of one's own—the joy of the homecoming.

How strange it is, sometimes, to think of people with a different religion, or color of the skin, who may speak very little of the local language, feeling the same emotions, sharing the same affections. For those who found refuge in the Philippines, our country occupies a special place in their hearts, because literally, the Philippines was the only part of the world that cared to spare their lives.

The Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education proclaimed President Manuel L. Quezon a "Righteous Person," which in the tradition of Israel and those commemorating the Holocaust is the title given to Gentiles (non-Jews) who helped the Jewish people in their time of persecution. A tree was planted in his name in Israel in a forest commemorating the 1.2 million Jewish children killed during the Holocaust.

Among the many honors given my grandfather in his lifetime and since, these are the greatest, not least in being the simplest, but also the most heartfelt.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

Closer

YOUNG BLOOD

Derek "Siopao" Chua

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

OVER THE PAST seven months, I have been overwhelmed by the new things I have learned about my father from stories related to me fondly by his friends and colleagues: how he eluded arrest during the Marcos era by sneaking out of the La Salle campus in the trunk of his professor's car, how he was blasted with water cannons while protesting in the streets, how he taught us to chant "Marcos Hitler Diktador Tuta!" when we were toddlers, how he would attend court hearings without socks, etc. I feel fortunate that these were shared with my family. These stories allowed us to see a side of Papa through other people's eyes, a side we had never heard about before.

There are many, many other stories. But whatever they may be, each one has taught me one important thing about my father: he was essentially a man for others. He thought more about the people around him than himself.

When I hear anecdotes about Papa and his work, I always feel a great sense of pride in being his son. This is because underlying these stories is a common theme: they are always about how he helped this person or that, most of them without charging a cent.

Papa did these things because he prided himself not in his success as a lawyer but in building an honest reputation, goodwill and trust with his clients, colleagues and friends. It wasn't the money but the work that mattered. He was always proud of hard work and being a self-made man. All of us looked up to him as an example.

As a father, Papa was liberal and reasonable but strict and uncompromising when it came to principles, such as honesty, loyalty and selflessness. He challenged us not to be afraid to work hard, to be bold and take risks, and to learn from our mistakes. He taught us not to think only of ourselves but other people as well. He always told us that the only thing he could really leave us was a good name, that we would never be ashamed to tell anyone that he was our father.

I am not ashamed. I have never been prouder to be William Chua's son.

People always talk to me about my dad's great accomplishments. But for me, it is the little things that make me the most sad, that make me miss him most. It is these little things that made him who he was, that made him a part of my everyday life. It wasn't his great accomplishments but his daily conduct and interactions with me that made him my dad. And now, they are no longer there. There's a void that reminds me every second, every minute, that life is no longer normal, that life will never be the same again, because the life I will live is one without my father in it.

I will never again hear his boisterous laughter, listen to his stories, green jokes and foul language, or see the twinkle in his eyes when he would come home with a plastic bag full of new DVDs. I will never again help him organize his movies, or talk about life, or share with him a late-night pizza or dimsum and noodles. I will miss hiding his *chicharon* in my closet so that my mom wouldn't catch him munching on it, or hearing him talk about his wine and liquor collection and explaining the difference between scotch and cognac.

I'll never again have those funny moments, when I'd accompany him to the mall with him wearing ratty old house shorts and slippers. The store clerks would often snub him, and he would have this satisfied smirk on his face when he'd buy something just to shock them by showing that this disheveled old man actually had cash in his pocket.

I will miss watching him tinker with his toolbox around the house, drilling holes and hammering nails for new paintings, rearranging the house décor every two weeks, changing light bulbs, and other things that made him quite a handyman.

My dad had simple joys. He got his kicks out of simple things. He had this habit of waking up in the middle of the night to check on us kids, and if we were sleeping, he would lie down in our beds and hug each of us for five minutes, whispering that he loved us. I loved him for that, and it saddens me to know that I will never share that with him again.

The blow is cushioned by the knowledge that, even if he is not here physically, the mark he left will always be with me, and in that sense, I am closer to him than ever before. While my dad may never see his grandchildren or how we will turn out in the years to come, I am thankful that in the 22 years that I knew him, he taught me enough to go on. He taught me how to be a man.

My father was sick for six months until he passed away, and for those six months, I took care of him, along with my mother and my siblings. It was the most difficult experience of my life, but it was also the most rewarding. Many asked me why I gave up job opportunities, further studies and post-graduate vacation to stay at home or in the hospital with Papa. For six months his sickness became the center of my life, and it meant sacrifices on my part as well as on the part of my entire family.

I have no regrets. I would give up everything again, if it is needed to do what I did then: dedicate my life and myself to someone who dedicated his life to me. Whatever sacrifices I made were but my way of repaying my Papa for everything he was to me: a father and a role model. I am at peace with the fact that, even if only for a while, I was able to share in what he went through. I was able to assure him through my care and my company that in whatever he had to endure, he was never alone.

Sometimes, I would hear his friends chide him for doing too much for too many people, when most of the time all he got in return were small tokens or simple "Thank you's." But that's precisely the kind of person he was. He helped not because he expected something in return, but because he found satisfaction in knowing he had made a difference in someone else's life. If in the past people thought that his work was trivialized because of lack of recognition or because he did not receive much in return, now I can see that his work really meant something.

From the outpouring of so much love and affection shown to him and our family during his time of need, I can honestly say that his work was anything but trivial. He truly made his mark in the lives of so many people. And that makes his memory and spirit more alive in me and my family than ever before. Papa will continue to inspire and move us in the years to come.

Derek "Siopao" Chua, 22, graduated from the Ateneo de Manila University last March 2004 after four years of blues, booze and beaches and now works with Ayala Land. His dad, human rights lawyer William Chua, passed away last December.

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Hoping CAP will turn out fine

MY wife and I have always believed that nothing beats proper planning—an attitude of preparedness—when it comes to fulfilling family responsibilities. We have four children who are now grown-ups and have their own families. Just like most parents, caring for them is endless. We still see to it that their future is well taken care of.

Believing in the value of foresight, we decided to get for our three grandchildren educational plans from the College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc. (CAP), supposedly the largest pre-need provider. Of course, we want the "best" for them all. We have fully paid for the two plans and are about to finish paying the other one. Unfortunately, in light of recent events and all the horrible news about the financial troubles CAP is into (bouncing checks, issues of insolvency, etc.), I'm now deeply worried as to how CAP will cope with its obligations. I now have this great fear of not being able to give my *"apos"* the education I have constantly dreamt for them.

It's a relief to know there are people like Sen. Mar Roxas who feel for planholders like us. I commend Roxas for bravely standing up on the issue. I agree with him that the Securities and Exchange Commission should publicize the outcome of its investigations on CAP and inform the people as to what the real score is; and to give CAP's patrons sound advice, whether or not we should continue with our payments, because as Roxas puts it, we might just be throwing good money after bad.

The senator even wished CAP to recover financially so it would be able to fulfill its obligations and promises (I also do). Moreover, the bill Roxas filed on creating the Planholders Protection Fund that would compensate planholders in case of bankruptcy is a gift to the Filipino people in these challenging times. I sincerely pray things will turn out fine for CAP and so for us, too.

—GIL M. ADELANTE,
39 Visayas Ave.,
Project 6, Quezon City

Clarification on manganese mining

THIS has reference to the news item "DENR stops manganese mining in Vizcaya tree planting site." (PDI, 1/22/05) The report quoted Roberto Apigo, provincial environment officer of Nueva Vizcaya, as saying that an inspection team of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had earlier found a violation by the Kablaaw Manganese Association Inc. (KMAI), specifically the use of heavy equipment for its "small-scale" mining activities.

In this connection, please be informed that the Environmental Management Bureau thoroughly evaluated the environmental compliance certificate (ECC) application of KMAI before issuing the ECC.

Prior to the issuance, the OIC governor of Nueva Vizcaya had granted KMAI, which is classified as a small-scale mining industry, a special permit to dispose/haul manganese ore. (The permit expired on Feb. 6, 2005.) The project was favorably endorsed by the barangay in a letter dated Oct. 15, 2004 and through a Barangay Resolution dated Nov. 13, 2004. A certification dated Nov. 16, 2004 was also issued by the municipal mayor, stating that he had consulted his constituents and they did not oppose the project.

The EMB Provincial Environment Office (PEO) of Nueva Vizcaya and our regional legal officer conducted two separate inspections on Jan. 6, 2005 and Jan. 13, 2005, respectively. The perceived violation of the association was its failure to secure a Special Land Use Permit from the DENR R02 Forestry Service and an Area Clearance from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau R02, prior to project operation; it was not on the use of the bulldozer.

While it may be true that the surface of the area had been scraped, it should also be noted that restoration/rehabilitation is a condition of the ECC. This office has drafted the notice of non-compliance to KMAI for the violation. The initial environmental examination (IEE) report disclosed the use of a bulldozer in scraping the surface. The Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office of Nueva Vizcaya has penalized the association with a fine of P99,801; this was paid on Jan. 19, 2005.

The Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) of the Dumayop Magat Agro-Forest Development Association Inc. does not prohibit mining activities. But it supports the extraction and disposition of mineral resources found in the CBFMA area.

Rest assured that the office is very strict in monitoring projects that are covered by the ECCs and will live up to its mandate of protecting the environment.

—ALLAN L. LEUTERIO,
regional director,
Environmental
Management Bureau,
Department of Environment
and Natural Resources,
Regional Office 02,
Nursery Compound,
San Gabriel, Tuguegarao City

Thanks to an angel with fair skin

ON SATURDAY, Feb. 5, 2005, around noon time, I was riding my motorcycle along Pasong Tamo in Makati City when I figured in a collision with a car at the corner of Malugay Street. I was thrown off my bike and suffered a fractured right wrist and left ankle, as well as bruises and scrapes on my shoulders, elbows and legs. Had I not been wearing my helmet, I'm certain my injuries would have been worse.

The point of this letter is to thank the lady who, by herself, came to my aid as I writhed and rolled in pain on the pavement in full view of other pedestrians and motorists (for about five minutes). Her skin was fair, she was dressed elegantly, and she spoke straight English (in a heavenly voice). She told me to bear with the pain until help arrived. She appealed to the other bystanders for someone with a car to take me to the hospital. She even took my helmet off and cradled my head and comforted me. She literally went out of her way to help me, a total stranger.

I told her she didn't have to, but she explained that she witnessed the entire accident, and that she couldn't sit back while pedestrians gawked. The Makati traffic police car eventually arrived and I was brought to the emergency room of the Makati Medical Center.

To the lady who helped me in my moment of pain, many, many thanks. You have bolstered my dwindling faith in humankind. I wish I could have gotten your name to thank you personally for your act of kindness, but for now this letter will have to do. Bless you and all those you care for.

—JAIME G. BESA,
jimmy.besa@gmail.com

SSS' ACOP under review

THIS pertains to the letter "Suggestions for SSS" (PDI, 12/28/04) on the program for the annual confirmation of pensioners (ACOP), which is under review.

May we reply:

1. On improving the pathetic Social Security System mailing system. We have upgraded the delivery time of checks and letters sent to our members. Our Office Services Department (OSD) sends out pensioner checks to the Post Office within one day from receipt thereof from the Data Computer Operations Department. Letters to pensioners, such as the ACOP notice, are sent out within a week after they are printed. Any delay by the postal service in the delivery of pension checks and letters is beyond the control of the SSS.

2. On the annual updating of pensioners' records.

A change of address is made only on a pensioner's request. Members can go to the nearest SSS office in their area or place of work and ask to change their address, status and beneficiary list.

3. On checking with the banks the current addresses of the pensioners, and on updating or counterchecking the information with SSS records. The ACOP notice is sent as registered mail. A disposition report from the Post Office shows that of the 455,531 notices sent out as of Nov. 15, 2004, a total of 38,687 came back as Return-To-Sender (RTS) letters. Records show that 416,844 pensioners received their letters but, for one reason or another, some of them failed to confirm their membership.

4. On an information campaign (radio, TV, broadsheet and tabloid) to encourage people to report the death of pensioners whose pensions are withdrawn by other persons on their behalf. We are studying different ways by which pensioners can confirm their entitlements, including certification by the banks, by SSS personnel and through reply letters sent back to the SSS. We are preparing a nationwide media campaign on the ACOP once the new measures are in place.

5. On restoring the "suspended" pensions of those who have updated their records within the prescribed period. As of Dec. 16, 2004, the SSS has lifted the suspension of pension of those listed as unverified pensioners. At the same time, we have sent out notices to banks to release the pensions of those who complied with the ACOP requirements. Those with pensions that were suspended earlier should, however, still report to the SSS not later than April 1 next year for actual verification.

We encourage pensioners to report to or communicate with the SSS for purpose of confirming their membership. Pensioners who are physically or mentally sick can contact the SSS and submit a physical examination report issued by a government doctor, and a request for a home visit by an SSS representative.

By reporting their membership, they not only update their personal records. They also ensure that they get the right amount of benefits due them.

—JOEL P. PALACIOS,
assistant vice president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System,
East Avenue, Diliman, QC

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Lost sovereignty

THE RECENT exposé on the clandestine operations of US intelligence specialists in the Philippines triggered open expressions of anger among many Filipinos.

The encroachment on national territories by US spies is another exercise of arrogance and bullying by the US government. Instead of creating just a mere oversight committee to look into the matter, the Philippine Senate should immediately stop it before people suffer its consequences. Allowing foreign military operations in the country is tantamount to relinquishing our sovereignty.

We fear that the Philippine National Police and the military might use to their advantage its recently propped-up terror bogey—Hukbong Khalid Trinidad and its alleged 320 Balik-Islam terrorist trainees—as a justification for more US-RP military and intelligence trainings in the country.

The trainings would be nothing but another layer of icing on top of the Bush government's "war on terror," and the heads of innocent Muslims are going to be the cherry. There is no doubt that a spate of community raids, witch-hunting, terror-tagging and unjustified arrests against our Muslim and Balik Islam brothers will soon follow. Muslims have always been used as the trophy for the photo opportunities and media hype of the Arroyo government—to shamelessly cover up the inutility of its armed forces and justify its dire obeisance to the US regime.

We align ourselves with the majority of the world who feel unsafe and faced with foreboding harm because of the warmongering US President Bush. The United States' self-endowed duty as the "world police" and "liberator" has not only cost many nations their sovereign right but also robbed them of genuine democracy, peace and justice. We condemn in the strongest terms the continuing puppetry of the Arroyo government to the United States' war agenda. Lest she has forgotten, the Bangsamoro people have been part of the peoples' movement that led to the downfall of her predecessors.

—COSAIN NAGA,
spokesperson,
Moro Christian Peoples Alliance,
48-A Mapagbigay St.,
Barangay Pinyahan,
Diliman, Quezon City

VAT
"HIT & RUN"
SA MAMAMAYAN!

ANTI-VAT rally

PDI PHOTO

The poor also have dreams

WE, of the Kapatirang Simbahan para sa Bayan (Kasimbayan) add our voices to those of Filipino women and citizens urging the Senate to junk the proposed increase in the value added tax.

Through decades of faithfully paying taxes, the poor never benefited from the levy extracted from their sweat and blood. Taxing the people—until their stomachs would have no food to grind, until their eyes are shut by misery and poverty, until their young are driven into committing anti-social activities—is totally immoral. The people are heavily taxed but the government is not fulfilling its duty to provide them access to affordable basic services like education, housing and health care. The poor, too, dream of enough food on their tables, education for their children, quality health services for their families, roof over their heads and other basic survival needs. Are these too much to ask? A higher VAT, which is an immoral taxation, could lead to even more misery and grief for the poor.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and her allies in the House of Representatives who voted for the VAT hike are obviously insensitive to the people's suffering. The poor are overworked yet underpaid. But the VAT proponents don't eat cheap instant noodles as their daily bread; they can afford to waste food, enroll their children in expensive schools and shower them with luxuries. No, our congressmen are not representing the majority of our people, and they do not have the heart for the poor.

It is appalling that while the poor are dying due to poverty, hunger and lack of basic services, the Arroyo government is exerting all possible means to burden them more with higher taxes. It is disappointing enough to see that taxes only go to the pockets of "public servants." Worse, the military, police and the MMDA forces under Bayani Fernando act as if we are under a fascist rule. Where would the poor turn to? The people don't deserve this kind of disservice!

May we remind the government that when tears of woes are no longer enough, the people rise and bring down the powers that cause their wretchedness. We say, enough of maltreating the poor and deceiving them into believing that the additional tax they will be burdened with will lead them to economic relief!

People are asking for bread, not stone.

—NORMA P. DOLLAGA,
general secretary,
Kapatirang Simbahan
Para sa Bayan (Kasimbayan)
879 Edsa Quezon City

Fely and her radio

COMMENTARY

Isabel T. Escoda

FELY is one of the 120,000 Filipinas working in Hong Kong who, on retiring around midnight to her cramped cell in the back of her Chinese employers' flat, doesn't immediately drop off to sleep. This is because, despite her hard daily grind, she's addicted to the little transistor radio she keeps next to her pillow. She finds that turning it on can help her drift into slumber, but more often than not, it keeps her mind awake even though her body is exhausted.

Fely toils six days a week, for almost 12 hours daily. She rises early to prepare breakfast for the children, dress them and take them to school. She then goes to market, returns home to clean the flat, put the laundry in the washing machine and prepare the children's afternoon snacks, as well as the evening meal for the whole family. Often her mistress, before leaving for work, tells her to run an errand, which Fely has to do before walking the dog. Later she fetches the children from school, gives them snacks, helps them bathe, and often helps them with their English homework. She serves dinner when her employers get home at night, then washes the dishes and cleans the kitchen before she does the ironing.

Her employers relax from their day at work by lounging in front of their TV—they have cable and satellite service (which of course shows Manila channels but Fely cannot watch those, being inundated by work). She looks forward to listening to her little radio when she's through with work.

On Saturdays, when the children are home, Fely has to mind them while doing her chores, as the parents either work or occupy themselves out of the house. On Sundays, although her contract says she's entitled to 24 hours off, Fely cannot leave the flat until she has washed the car and laid breakfast on the table. Her mistress, fearing she'll hang out with bad companions, has imposed a 9 p.m. curfew. When she returns, Fely has to clean up the mess in the kitchen before she can relax in her cell and store energy for the following week's slog.

On Sundays, Fely meets her friends downtown to chat or play cards on a concrete park bench. Movie tickets are expensive, so they hunt for little bargains at the alleys before going to eat at McDonald's, Jollibee or a Chinese noodle shop.

It's usually after midnight when Fely retires to her narrow bunk and turns on her radio, the sounds of which will eventually help her drift toward slumber. Twice a week, a couple of Hong Kong radio stations run programs in Tagalog. Both shows apparently view their listeners as idiots, offering what the Pinoy producers deem as entertainment for the women. The programs consist of a mishmash of pop music from Manila, interviews with local Pinoy businessfolk hawking their wares (health and beauty products, real estate, insurance policies), occasional announcements about festivities or services for the OFWs by a consulate official, and a phone-in portion where the women call to greet their friends around the territory.

Hosting one Pinoy program is Michael Vincent (probably born Miguel Vicente), and a hermaphrodite called Tita Keri who dispenses advice with the wheedling unctuousness of a barangay elder. Phone calls are taken from listeners who ask for advice or greet their friends.

The other program is hosted by three braying boys who endlessly fill the airwaves with their cackling laughter over topics only they seem to find funny. They, too, take phone calls from the domestics whom they pelt with coarse remarks which border on the insulting; one of them puts on an aging falsetto to dispense silly medical advice.

A weekly religious program at a Hong Kong radio station features a "Pastora Julie" who has obviously learned her trade from the smarmy American TV evangelists. She knows her Bible inside out, speaks in Taglish citing chapters and verses, and invites listeners to join her "Calvary Connectivity" church. In between her preaching, her assistant reads out text messages from the domestics requesting prayers for healing, for families back home, for help in finding employers, and "financial breakthroughs."

Another religious show features an incomprehensible Pinoy male whose grasp of the Bible isn't as slick as Pastora Julie's and who exhorts listeners by punctuating every other phrase with "Amen" and "Hallelujah!"

All in all, the Hong Kong-based Pinoy radio programs present an unedifying diet of trivia and nonsense that serves no purpose but to addle listeners' brains with sappy music, inane chatter and phony advice. They may provide comfort to those wishing to hear Tagalog amid all the Cantonese and Mandarin heard around the territory, but they insult intelligent listeners like Fely with all their pap.

So she prefers to surf for the Manila stations sandwiched between the Cantonese and Mandarin stations which have stronger frequencies. The Philippine stations filter through after midnight over the medium-wave band (shortwave has mainly Chinese stations). Signals from the Philippine stations are weaker, but she finds them more interesting, and sometimes sad. Interesting, because she can hear *balita* from home though she detests the usual *pulitika*; sad, because the clichéd Pinoy love songs produce thoughts of home and deferred plans for marriage and children.

Fely, who's from Bacolod, has serendipitously been able to access dySB (Radyo Bacolod's "Super Radyo") which overuses the word *"biktima"* while relaying news about rapes and ambushes). Other stations range from dzME (Radyo Uno— "Tinig ng Katotohanan" whose weak signal makes Fely guess it may be owned by El Shaddai or Iglesia ni Cristo); dwXI (Delta Broadcasting) and dwIZ (with more *balita* on *biktimas* of shootings); and dwSS (one show recently featured a demagogue assailing President Macapagal-Arroyo). The religious stations endlessly pray and preach, with dzRB (Radio Veritas) varying its fare on Sundays with a *doctora* who deals with health problems and touts "Wonder Oil" available in her clinics. All these help lull Fely, who's an agnostic, to sleep.

The fact that serious thought is not given to providing intelligent programs, instead of the usual "dumbed down" fare, for the migrant workers shows a lack of regard for these *kababayan* who make up a captive audience. Producers (in Hong Kong and the Philippines) do a grave disservice to OFWs like Fely who have no access to television, rely on radio for their relaxation and wish to be informed and uplifted.

Journalist Isabel T. Escoda is a longtime Hong Kong resident who has written the books "Letters From Hong Kong" and "Hong Kong Postscript."

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Text us your feedback: inquirer atn name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart) Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU
Room 201, Bonuan Apartelle
10 Happy Glen Loop, Baguio City
Tel. No. (074)443-9255
Fax No. (074)443-8971
E-mail: inq_baguio@inquirer.com.ph

SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU
23 Aurora St., Old Albay District
Legazpi City
Tel. No. (052) 820-8402
Fax No. (052) 820-1274
E-mail: inq_bicol@inquirer.com.ph

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c/o Cebu Daily News
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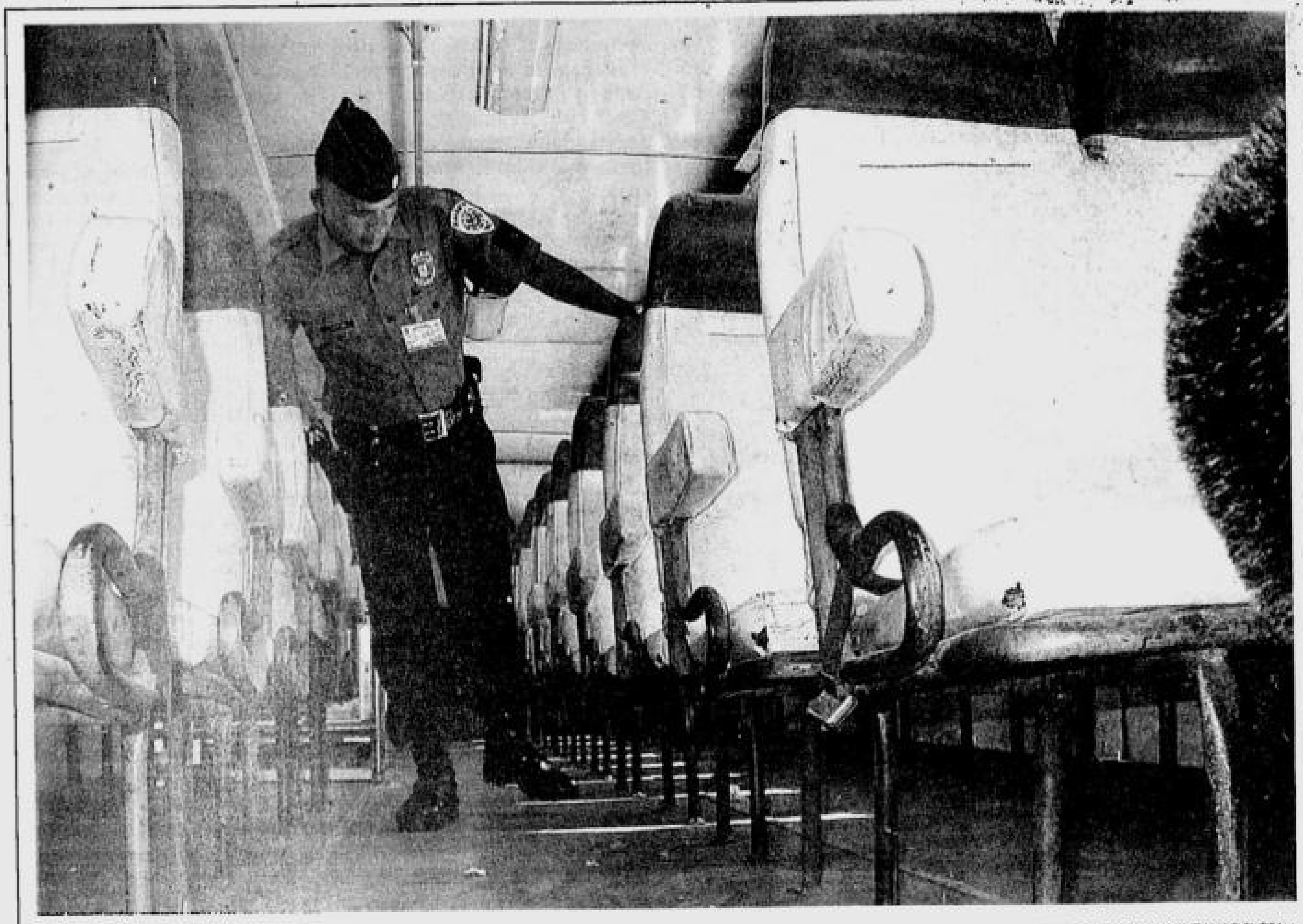

BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

WATCHFUL EYES
A policeman inspects the floor of a bus at the Davao City Overland Transport Terminal checking for abandoned bags or baggage that may contain bombs or weapons.

Rebel terrain proves too daunting for cops

LEGAZPI CITY—A 15-man team from the Catanduanes Police Provincial Office on Monday failed to catch up with fleeing New People's Army rebels who killed three policemen and a civilian and wounded seven others, including the provincial police director, in separate attacks on Monday.

PO2 Edmundo Araojo, a member of the pursuing team, said they lost the escaping rebels to darkness and the thickness of the forest in the mountain where the rebels retreated.

Araojo said they could only determine the position of the rebels through gunfire coming from them.

"The rebel group, with 15 to 20 fighters, was positioned at the higher area of the mountain while we, in the pursuing group, were at the lower ground," Araojo said.

He added that they could not see their enemies in the forest.

"We heard different gunfire that led us to an estimate of the number of the rebels," Araojo said, adding that whenever they hear gunfire, they retaliate by firing at the direction where the shots came from.

Another police team left Camp Francisco Camacho yesterday morning to resume the pursuit operation.

In Legazpi City, Capt. Edmund Gefti, director for operation of the Naval Forces in Southern Luzon, said they were ready to help the police by deploying Navy soldiers to the island province of Catanduanes.

Gefti said they have ships and boats that could be used in case there is a need to send troops to the island.

He added that they still have two available ships.

One of their ships is in Eastern Mindanao being used by the soldiers in the war against Moro rebels.

The Naval Forces in Southern Luzon sent patrol craft and men to the island-province when then provincial director Charles Calima was also hurt in an ambush by the rebels.

In Lucena City, Maj. Jose Broso, spokesperson of the military's Southern Luzon Command based in Camp Nakar in Lucena City, scoffed at communist spokesman Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal's admission that NPA rebels were behind the ambush in Virac, Catanduanes on Monday morning.

"Mr. Rosal was one hell of a hypocrite. With his ready admission, he can no longer deny that the NPA is a bunch of killers and the Communist Party of the Philippines, a fraternity of terrorist groups hiding behind a lost cause," Broso said.

He also chided leftist groups, saying: "Who now really maintains a death squad? Is it the military or the NPA?"

Leftist groups have always blamed the killings of leftist activists to the so-called "death squad" allegedly composed of active military personnel and members of para-military groups.

"The victims were performing civilian tasks, they were not in combat. But they were still killed," Broso said. *Job Belen and Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

DENR to probe gov, son on illegal logging raps

MATI, Davao Oriental—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will investigate allegations that Gov. Maria Elena Palma Gil and her son, Jaypot, are involved in the worsening illegal logging problem in the province.

Earlier, Sen. Miriam Santiago named Palma Gil as one of the governors protecting illegal loggers.

Palma Gil has repeatedly denied the allegations and challenged her detractors to present evidence.

But Salvador Malbog yesterday said the "full-blown" investigation, to be spearheaded by the community environment and natural resources office in Baganga town, would determine if Palma Gil and her son, Jaypot, were guilty or innocent.

Malbog, who replaced suspended provincial environment chief Benjamin Rosillo, said DENR 11 director Edilberto Boiser gave them 15 days to come out with the result of the investigation.

"And if we find evidence against them, then we will file illegal logging charges against the Palma Gils in court. There will be no sacred cows in the government's intensified crackdown against illegal loggers," Malbog said.

Malbog said he was ready for the consequences of the investigation.

"It's really very hard to fight the illegal loggers if it is true that top officials in the province are the ones engaged in illegal logging. You know, these top officials can request for my transfer anytime. But I am ready for that," he said.

Malbog said they already charged several officials, including Cateel town Vice Mayor Aristotle Abella, a brother of Davao Oriental Rep. Corazon Malanyaon, and provincial board member Camilo Nuñez, with illegal logging.

He said cases were also filed against other suspects, bringing the total number of cases filed in court to 49.

"We call on those accusing the Palma Gils of involvement in illegal logging to provide us with evidence and we will help them in the filing of the case," Malbog said.

Palma Gil said she also wanted the issue resolved.

But she warned that her opponents should come up with evidence of her illegal activities or she will sue them for libel.

He singled out INQUIRER columnist Mon Tulfo. *Ferdinand Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Romblon to be under Bicol under shift to federalism

IROSIN, Sorsogon—Romblon to become part of the Bicol Region?

That's what will happen if moves to amend the Constitution materialize in Congress as proposed by some legislators, Rep. Joey Solis (2nd District, Sorsogon) said.

He said under the proposal to change the republican form of government to a federal one, the archipelago will be divided into 10 federal states.

Solis, one of the main proponents of the Charter change move, said the states will be composed of the following: Ilocos Region with the Cordilleras, the entire Region III, Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog minus Romblon and Palawan, Bicol Region to include Romblon province, Eastern Visayas, Western Visayas to include Palawan, ARMM, Central Mindanao and Northern Mindanao.

The legislator said each state will have only one governor and provincial governments will be abolished, leaving only the municipal governments.

Provincial government employees will become state employees.

Solis explained that this proposed set-up will give local officials a wide latitude in managing their local governments.

It is expected to spur economic growth in the countryside as LGUs would be less dependent on Malacañang, he added.

Each state will have its own state legislature and the governor will be aided by his own state Cabinet.

Speaking before a large crowd of civic leaders, municipal and barangay officials here, Solis said a big number of congressmen is pushing for the constitutional amendment to correct existing flaws in the Charter which hamper development.

He cited the tedious process of legislation whereby bills pass through a circuitous path.

Solis said a lot of bills get snagged at the Senate even if they have been approved at the House of Representatives. *Bobby Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

600 rally in Iloilo vs hike in VAT

ILOILO CITY—Around 600 members of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan yesterday joined nationally-coordinated protest actions in Iloilo and Aklan to protest the proposed increase in the value-added tax (VAT) from the current 10 to 12 percent.

About 400 protesters bearing black placards and streamers assembled at the grounds of the Museo Iloilo before marching on the city's main streets. They later held a cultural program at the Iloilo City Hall.

In Aklan, 200 Bayan-led protesters held a rally at the Crossing Banga-New Washington in the capital town of Kalibo. Earlier, the protesters held a picket and signature campaign against the increase at the Kalibo public market.

Aurelio Bosque, Bayan-Panay chair, said the government should allocate more funds for social services instead of imposing more taxes on the people.

The independent think-tank Ibon Foundation estimates that the increased VAT would raise the deficit in the monthly budget of Filipinos in the lowest income levels (those earning an average of P2,200 a month) by as much as 65 percent.

"A huge shortfall in the monthly incomes of poor Filipino families would only mean more borrowing, and being further buried in debt," said Ibon Foundation Inc. Executive Director Rosario Bella-Guzman in an e-mailed statement.

Instead of increasing VAT rates, Guzman said the government should pursue "more creative solutions to its fiscal problems like scrapping onerous debts." *Nestor Burgos Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau*

Cagayan mayor wounded in ambush

TUGUEGARAO CITY--A Cagayan town mayor was wounded while his 6-year-old nephew and an aide were killed on Wednesday when five armed men believed to be communist New People's Army rebels ambushed them in Lasam, Cagayan, a report here said.

The report said Lasam Mayor Eulogio Agatep, 42, was on his way to the airport here to take an Air Philippines flight to Manila when he was attacked shortly before noon at Barangay Minanga in the town.

His nephew, Jethro Agatep, and an aide, Orlando Quebral, 40, were instantly killed. Agatep was taken to the Cagayan Valley Medical Center here for treatment of bullet wounds in the head and foot.

Three other aides, including Agatep's brother Isaac, driver of the mayor's Pajero, were also wounded. Isaac is the father of the young Jethro.

Supt. Alfredo de Vera, Cagayan Valley police director, ordered Senior Supt. Rodrigo de Gracia, Cagayan police director, to put up and man checkpoints to prevent such attacks in the province where NPA commands operated.

Rev. Honey Astrasa, a pastor of the United Methodist Church and Agatep's neighbor, said the mayor had been lax in his visits to the villages. "He even travelled alone sometimes," Astrasa said. *Villamor Visaya, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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Pangasinan groups, execs act to revive mangroves

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—The disappearing mangrove forest in Pangasinan finally got the much needed shot-in-the-arm with the provincial government signing a memorandum of agreement with six people's organizations to replant decimated mangrove areas.

Gov. Victor Agbayani, representing the provincial government, has signed the MOA which called for the planting of mangroves on a hectare each by the groups in Anda and Bolinao towns.

The groups in Anda are the Samahang Mamamayan sa Macandocandong, Poblacion Multi-Sectoral Organization, Sablig Barangay Multi-Sectoral Association and the Samahang Multi-Sectoral ng Dilaoan Inc.

In Bolinao, the groups are the Samahan ng mga Mangingisda at Magsasaka para sa Kalikasan in Pilar Village and the Samahan ng mga Maliliit ng Mangingisda at Magsasaka ng Victory.

Under the MOA, the provincial government will provide 5,000 pieces of mangrove seedlings to each group and technical assistance to maintain and protect the project.

The groups, on the other hand, will operate, manage and maintain the project, and provide counterpart resources like labor and fencing materials.

Agbayani said the provincial government embarked in the mangrove reforestation program because the mangrove forests had been depleted due to indiscriminate cutting and conversion of the forests into fish ponds, residential and commercial areas.

The provincial agricultural office has established a mangrove nursery to cater to the mangrove seedling requirements of the program. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

'Jueteng' seen making PNP post lucrative

By Melvin Gascon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—About a year ago, the Philippine National Police found it difficult to attract police officials to come to Nueva Vizcaya to take on the job of provincial police director.

Now, the post has apparently become so attractive that several police officials wanted to be included as candidates to replace outgoing police director, Senior Supt. Felix Caddali.

According to a source in the provincial government, at least seven police officers have signified their interest to replace Caddali.

"(The aspirants) visited (Gov. Luisa Cuaresma) hoping that their names would be included in the short list of candidates and eventually, be the lucky one when the governor finally makes the choice," the source told the INQUIRER.

Caddali will retire on March 5, after a 14-month stint in the province.

Asked whether the police officers' renewed interest in the post had anything to do with the revived operations of the illegal numbers game *jueteng* here, the source said: "Your guess is as good as mine."

Catholic Bishop Ramon Villena, a staunch crusader against illegal gambling, earlier denounced local police officials for allegedly tolerating the operations of *jueteng* in exchange for bribe.

Caddali has denied Villena's accusations, citing the arrests of bet collectors in various towns here.

Caddali also said the allegations that the police officials' interest in the post was linked to continued *jueteng* operations in the province were "mere speculations."

"There are many officers with the rank of senior superintendent who, at present, do not have [directorship] positions. Since I will be leaving, it is understandable that many of them would be interested," he said.

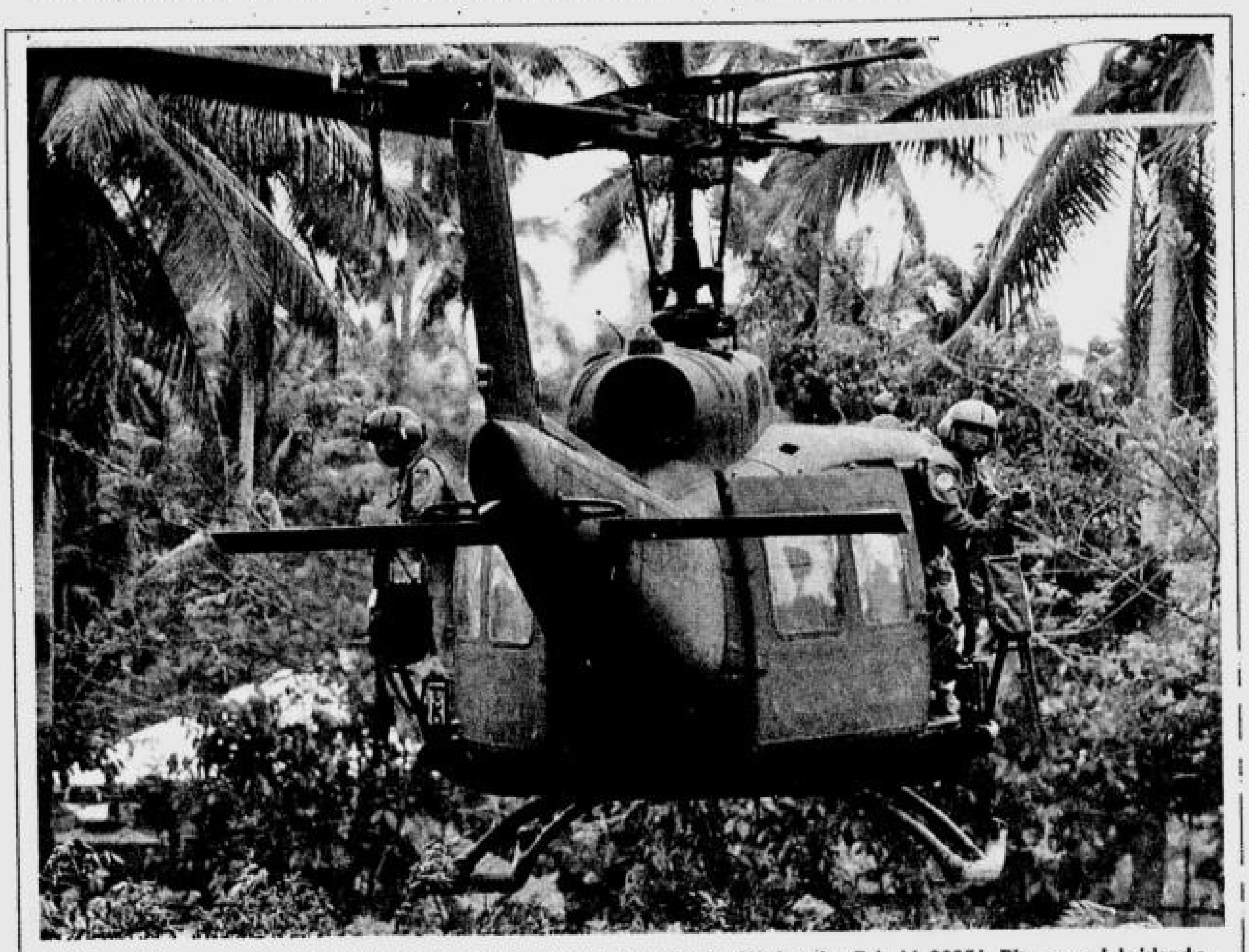
But he said about a year ago, when the province was declared "jueteng-free," PNP officials had a hard time looking for candidates.

The competition for the post has become so intense that it has created animosity among some aspirants, the source said.

For the past weeks, some officers have been busy doing the rounds among provincial officials and even mayors to lobby for their support, the source added.

Chief Supt. Alfredo de Vera, Cagayan Valley police director, said he already submitted to Cuaresma the names of three officials that she could consider for the post.

De Vera, however, declined to identify these candidates.



TWO machine gunners in a Huey helicopter scour the ground before landing Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2005 in Bitanag on Jolo island a day after government troops captured the main camp of followers of jailed former leader of the Moro National Liberation Front Nur Misuari. The military said at least 27 soldiers were killed in the two-week military offensive. AP

1,000 homes planned for Vizcaya storm victims

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—At least 1,000 families here would benefit from a multi-sectoral housing program being initiated as part of relief and rehabilitation efforts for typhoon victims.

Under the Gawad Kalinga (GK) project, 1,000 houses will be built on three areas here through GK's partnership with the national and local governments and civil society organizations.

Luis Oquiñena, GK national director, said Nueva Vizcaya, which was among those devastated by Typhoon Yoyong in December last year, was the first province in Luzon to benefit from the recently-launched "GK777" program.

GK777 was launched to build 700,000 homes in 7,000 communities in seven years.

"We are taking advantage of these past calamities as an opportunity to rehabilitate the lives of our poor, whose lives were already a tragedy, but were only given the spotlight when they were seen in the media," Oquiñena said.

He said the project, for its first phase here, aims to complete at least 200 houses by June.

Gov. Luisa Cuaresma said three GK villages would be established in Bambang, Bagabag, and Dupax del Norte towns, three areas worst hit by Yoyong.

Cuaresma said the GK777 comes as a "timely blessing" for about 1,400 families whose houses were destroyed by flash floods and strong winds brought about by Typhoon Yoyong on Dec. 2.

"We are very grateful to the Gawad Kalinga because the provincial government could not fully extend help to our people without the support of the private sector," she said. *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Tourists' security sought

AKLAN Rep. Florencio Miraflores called on the Philippine National Police to also tighten security in the country's tourist spots in the wake of terror attacks in General Santos City, Davao City and Metro Manila. In a press statement, Miraflores said tourist areas, such as Boracay in his home province, are as vital as any government installation because these are frequented by foreigners. "Our tourist destinations are our windows on the world and they can be very attractive targets for terrorists," he said. "All we have to do now is make our tourists feel more secure with the presence of additional security forces," he said in his statement.

Trader found dead

CABANATUAN CITY—The body of a missing businesswoman here was found Wednesday in a shallow grave in a farm in Talavera, Nueva Ecija. A dog found the body of Juliana Padiernos-Hashimoto in the farm owned by Virgilio Constantino in Barangay Burnay in Talavera. Hashimoto, 39, left her house at Primavera Homes Subdvision here on Sept. 1 to deliver pieces of jewelry, worth P500,000, to a businessman in Talavera. Ten days later, her Toyota Altis was found in a ravine in Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya. Mark Pangilinan, 31, the businessman who reportedly ordered the jewelry, told police he did not meet Mrs. Hashimoto. A few days later, Pangilinan was abducted by armed men. His car was found in Guimba town but his fate is unknown. *Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Top criminals fall

BALANGA CITY—Police on Friday arrested three wanted men in Bataan in separate operations. Arrested were Jonjon Galman, 24, of Mariveles town; Ronald Rudio, 28, of Orion town; and Jose Lopez, 50, of Balanga City. Galman and Rudio are facing murder charges while Lopez is facing a case of illegal possession of firearms. Supt. Elmer Macapagal, Bataan police director, presented the suspects to Chief Supt. Rowland Albano, PNP Central Luzon director, in a visit to Bataan on Friday. *Greg Refraccion, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Men in motorcycle kill 2

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—A man and his two-year-old nephew were shot and killed by two motorcycle-riding men in Barangay Jose Abad Santos in Guagua town on Feb. 2. Reports identified the victims as Noel Garcia, 36, a jeepney driver, and his nephew Angelo Atay. Garcia's father, 60-year-old Nicanor, was wounded and taken to the Diosdado Macapagal Memorial Hospital in the City of San Fernando. Reports said the victims were in a jeepney that Garcia was driving when they were attacked. *Jun Malig, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Bus held up

LEGAZPI CITY—Four unidentified armed men held up a passenger bus bound for Liloan, Leyte on Feb. 7 and robbed its passengers of cash, cellular phones and other valuables. Edgardo Sta. Maria, driver of the CUL bus, said the four suspects, all speaking with a Visayan accent and wearing bonnets, declared the hold-up at Anayan, Pili, Camarines Sur. The suspects alighted at the junction of Lakandula and Maharlika Highways in Barangay Bañag in Daraga, Albay and boarded a tricycle to Legazpi City. *Jed Ll. Bacason, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Dog trader nabbed

CANDABA, Pampanga—Police arrested a man who was buying dogs in Barangay Pasig here. Chief. Insp. Jovencio Flores, police director, said they seized seven dogs from suspected dog trader Eduardo Ramos, 40, on Feb. 3. Flores said Ramos, who was arrested for violating Republic Act 8485, or the Animal Welfare Act, was also accused of selling dogs to eateries in Cabanatuan City. The Animal Welfare Act prohibits the trade and slaughter of dogs for meat. *Jun Malig, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Imported rice arrives

TABACO CITY—A Vietnamese vessel, the MV Binh Phuoc of the Higaki Shipping Co., unloaded some 132,000 bags of rice here for the National Food Authority. The vessel arrived on Feb. 8 and left on Monday. Nestor Alcantara, NFA regional manager, said the shipment was part of the 840,000 bags of rice to be delivered to Bicol this year. He said that the NFA has allocated 73,087 bags of rice every quarter in Albay alone. The NFA rice has a retail price of P16 per kilo. *Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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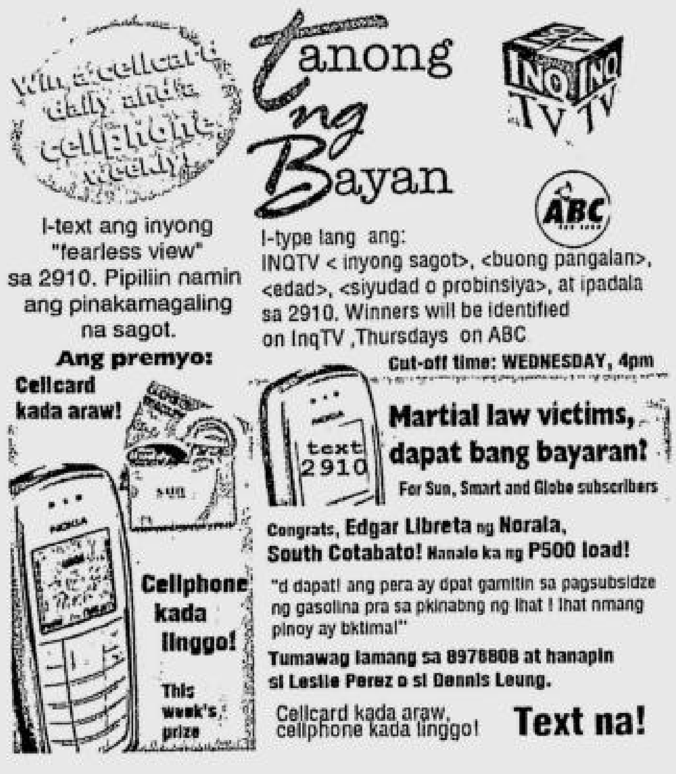

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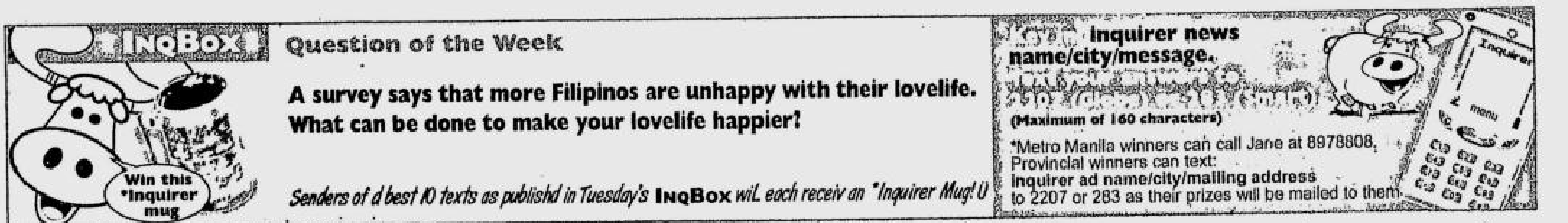

Question of the Week

A survey says that more Filipinos are unhappy with their lovelife. What can be done to make your lovelife happier?

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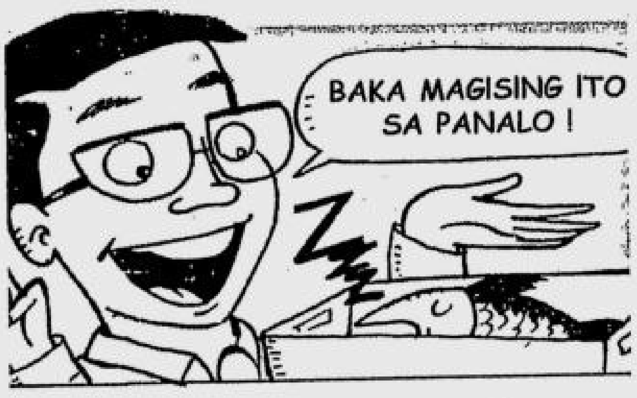
BAKA MAGISING ITO SA PANALO !

Method to ship live fish waterless makes it to int'l contest

By Alex V. Pal
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—The local inventor of a preservation technique in which live fish is put to sleep without water for more than 12 hours has been chosen as a semi-finalist in the University of San Francisco Business Plan Competition.

The business plan of Bonifacio Comandante was selected as one of 20 semi-finalists from a pool of 150 entries submitted by over 100 universities from 18 countries.

The USF Business Plan Competition, to be held from March 9-12 in San Francisco, offers a prize of $25,000 for the winner, whose entry will also qualify for the Moot Corp3 Competition, dubbed by Business Week as "The Super Bowl of Business Plan Competition" in Austin, Texas in May.

Comandante, president of Buhi Marine Worldwide Supply Int'l., won last year's Negros Oriental Business Development Foundation Innovation Awards.

His start-up capital of P50,000, which he got as his prize for the Innovation Awards, has now grown to P5 million, with the entry of business partners from Japan and Australia.

Comandante accidentally stumbled on his "anti-stress salt solution" to enable fish to hibernate as he was experimenting on the sex reversal of groupers in Palawan in 1987.

But he did not launch the product until he had successfully defended it as his thesis in his masters degree in Coastal Resource Management at Silliman University in 2003.

This technology now enables Philippine fish producers to export live fish to Japan, Taiwan, China and other countries, for a more competitive price.

"Water accounts for 75 percent of the shipment cost so if that is eliminated, our fish producers in the Philippines could make it big in the international market," he said.

Comandante said he was confident that he would stand a good chance in the competition because his business plan had a good financial and social impact.

"It's very seldom that you have a business that has both a good financial and social impact. The financial impact is so appetizing and the social technology is so great that this is like two big things put into one," he said.

To catch the judge's attention, Comandante said he will have to rely on the element of surprise, which he is keeping a secret.

Comandante said he will ensure that the technology will remain in Filipino hands.

"We own 50 percent of the corporation and only Filipino technicians will apply and handle the technology anywhere in the world."

CSC chief opposes resumption of career tests in provinces

By Alex Pal
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—Civil Service Commission Chair Karina Constantino-David has defended her decision to suspend career service examinations in the provinces amid reports of rampant cheating.

David told local officials and personnel during a forum on Friday that she turned down a request of the Central Visayas Council of Administrative and Personnel Officers to restore the practice of giving the tests in the provinces, which the CSC suspended starting last year.

She said the tests would be held only in two places in each region unless the tests' integrity could be assured if they were given elsewhere.

David said syndicates in and out of the CSC leak test questions and the chances of cheating increase as test materials are transported.

"The more often the CSC exams are transported, the more chances of cheating. In every examination for the past five years, there have been cheating . . . all over the country," Constantino-David said.

From her "horror stories," she recalled that the CSC once caught a person who attempted to smuggle a test booklet to a review school which operated nationwide.

The answers to the test questions would be placed in codes and printed very lightly in pencil, which the examinee would bring to the testing room.

The code, usually in shapes, corresponds to the letters, which the examinees were supposed to choose in answer to each question.

It was also common, she said, for an examinee to go to the restroom, while the examination was going on, to retrieve the set of answers hidden at a pre-arranged place by a professional who jotted down the answers when the exam started.

It was usual to see 80 percent of examinees in a testing center "with very similar answers," said David.

"The Filipino is very talented, but this talent is put into cheating, not into good use," she said.

She said the CSC had to discard its tests and had to write new questionnaires to flush out the syndicate.

David also announced a new scheme to be undertaken by her office this year, which would seek to make government posts more attractive to highly skilled professionals such as doctors and lawyers.

This program, which will be drafted through a World Bank loan, will provide for higher pay to doctors and lawyers by classifying these positions as highly technical positions.

"It's a sacrifice for lawyers and doctors to stay in public office, where people are paid only 30 percent of what their counterparts in the private sector is earning," David said, adding, "We're really insane to remain in our posts!"

Gov't urged to destroy seized carrots

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—Provincial officials wanted to destroy imported carrots worth more than P60 million now housed in several ports in Manila because, they said, these contained pests and diseases which might reach crops here.

Provincial Board Member John Kim said the carrots from China were being kept in 51 container vans by the Bureau of Customs in various international ports in Manila. These were seized from September to December last year.

Kim said the shipments have been kept in freezer crates awaiting disposal.

The Benguet provincial board, however, approved last week a resolution asking the Department of Agriculture and the BOC "to confiscate, condemn and destroy" the seized carrots.

"It's okay for us if they allow these to be disposed of but we are thinking of the safety of our own consumers and our farms," said Kim, chair of the board's agriculture committee.

He cited a pest risk analysis by the Bureau of Plant Industry two years ago which said that carrots imported from China contained pests and diseases which were not yet native to the country.

"What if these pests and diseases affect our crops here?" Kim asked.

He said the government spends as much as P1,800 a day per container van in keeping the carrots in refrigeration. He said each container van contains carrots worth at least P1.2 million. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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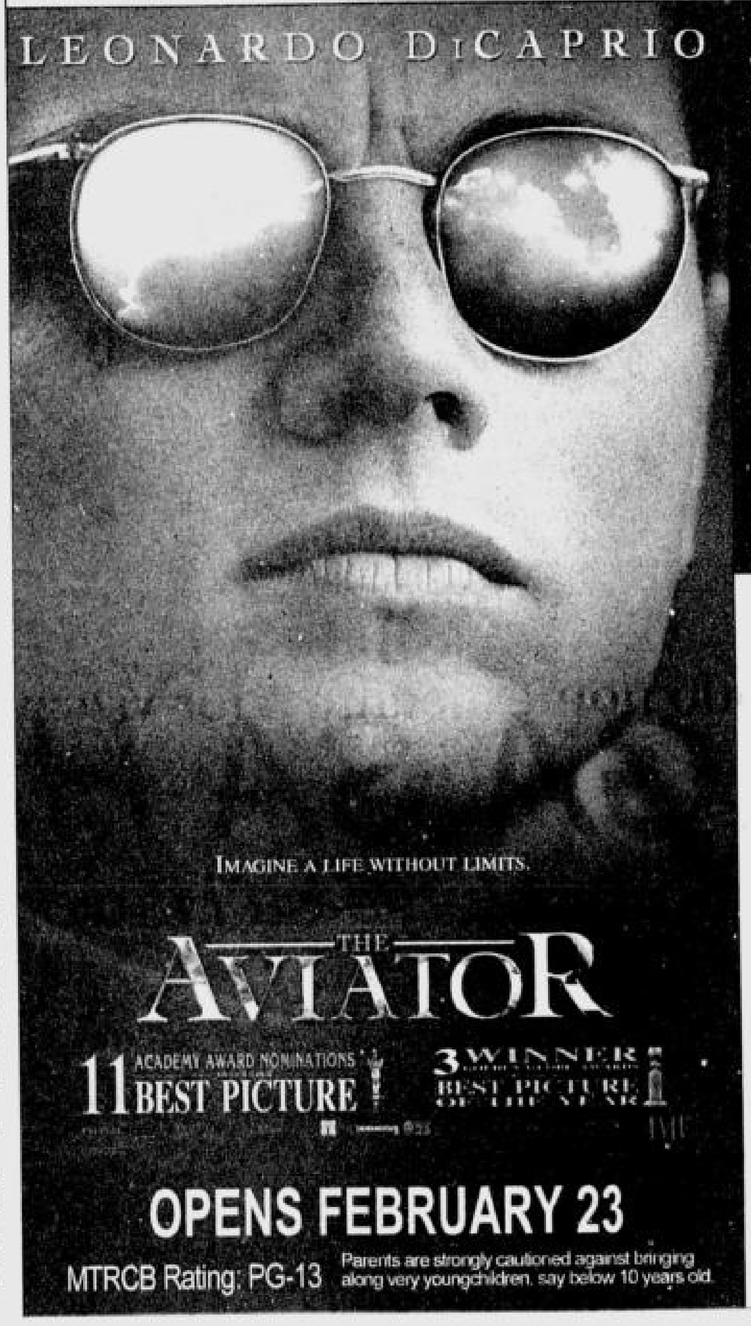
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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

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Mangrove areas lost to fishponds

By Bobby Labalan
Prieto Diaz, Sorsogon

BICOL'S biggest mangrove forest in Prieto Diaz town in Sorsogon is being threatened by fishpond developers, who have already cut down thousands of mangrove trees, and the alleged indifference of government officials tasked with protecting it.

A MANGROVE tree with thin, long outgrowths hanging from the stem in Prieto Diaz, Sorsogon. BOBBY LABALAN

Nineteen mangrove species grow in 1,006 hectares of wetlands in 11 barangays of Prieto Diaz, 30 km southeast of Sorsogon City, fronting the Pacific Ocean.

The forest serves as the town's natural protection against weather disturbances, ocean surge and soil erosion spawned by big waves, said forester Anabel Barquilla of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office.

A big portion of the area is covered by a reforestation program initiated by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the late 1980s. According to the DENR, the remaining mangrove forest is now nearly equal in size to the 950 hectares of fishponds in the area.

Intruders are cutting down trees at an alarming rate, members of the Seamancor Eco-Developers, an organization which holds a mangrove stewardship agreement with the DENR, said.

Some of the fishpond developers have secured permits from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, which approves applications for fishpond lease agreements (FLAs), while others possess authority from the Development Bank of the Philippines.

Many of them come from outside Sorsogon, some even as far as the Visayas, Mayor Benito Doma said as he expressed dismay over the sad state of affairs.

The municipal government has repeatedly invited BFAR regional officials, who are based in Pili, Camarines Sur, to a meeting to discuss the problem, but the agency has ignored it, Doma said.

Process

Doma said the local officials wanted to know from the BFAR how the FLAs were being granted to fishpond developers so that they could act accordingly. The bureau, he said, did not consult them before it granted the permits.

Worse, the officials did not know that some of the fishpond projects were within mangrove plantations, he said. By the time they learned about it, the mangrove trees had already been cut down.

Pete Vela Cruz, a member of the DENR team implementing the reforestation project, said the approval of an FLA normally went through a multi-layered process in order to ensure environmental protection.

First, the land should be classified by the DENR's Forest Management Bureau as a national park, timberland or forest. Once classified as timberland, it must be declared alienable and disposable.

The DENR must then determine whether the land is suitable for fishpond purposes. If it declares the area as such, only then can a prospective developer apply for an FLA.

Vela Cruz said the DENR had not classified the mangrove forest as suitable for fishpond purposes, so the granting of the lease agreements by the BFAR was highly questionable.

DBP authority

Doma said those wielding only an authority from the DBP were operating fishponds that were foreclosed by the bank after the original developers failed to pay their obligations to it.

He doubted the legality of the foreclosure since fishponds acquired through the FLAs could not be used as loan collaterals. Theoretically, the fishponds are government property that were merely leased to the operators and thus should have not been accepted by the bank as collateral, he said.

Doma said he had consulted with DENR lawyers about the legality of a local executive order that he planned to issue, which, he added, would pave the way for the demolition of the illegal fishponds.

The mayor said fishpond operators in the area did not show up in the meeting called by the local government.

Doma said his administration had initiated the filing of criminal cases against some of the fishpond developers, but not one had prospered in court. A lot of the cases were dismissed even before these could even reach the court.

Rene Camacho, community environment and natural resources officer (Cenro), said the officials were aghast at why they lost all the cases. They had hoped that the prosecutor's office would advise them on how to file the cases properly and what evidence to present since they were all working for the government, he said.

Camacho said all their cases were anchored on the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 705.

The Provincial Multi-Sectoral Forest Protection Committee (PMFPC), headed by the Cenro, has created a special sub-committee to look into the problems besetting the mangrove forest and recommend actions to stop the environmental abuse.

According to the DENR, the mangrove forest supports a diverse ecosystem. Data from the department's Coastal Environment Program shows that it is helping the continued existence of at least 836 hectares of sea grass, 800 hectares of coral reefs, and 1,200 hectares of tidal mud flats.

Researchers have identified at least 19 varieties of mangrove trees in the wetlands. These are the *pagatpat, nilad, bakawan-bato, bakawan-babae, bakawan-lalaki, malatangal, pototan, langarai, busain, pototan-lalaki, tinduk-tindukan, saging-saging, tabigi, bantigi, buta-buta, taban, bungalow* and *api-api*.

At least eight species of sea grass abound, covering an area of as far as two kilometers from the shoreline. Among the species are the tropical eel grass, dugong grass, round-tipped sea grass, toothed sea grass, fiber strand grass, syringe grass and the spoon grass.

Bird species

Judy Doma, a DENR biologist and the mayor's wife, warned that the destruction of the forest would also adversely affect the habitat of 22 species of birds.

They include the tree sparrow, chestnut manikin, little mangrove heron, glossy swiftlet, pacific swallow, white-collared kingfisher, ashy minivet, amethyst brown fruit dove, white-breasted wood swallow, Richards *pipit*, Philippine flower pecker, yellow-vented bulbul, barred rail, cattle egret, Kentish plover, whimbrel, terek sandpiper, green shank, Pacific Reef egret-dark face, Pacific Reef egret-white face, and the wandering whistling duck.

The biologist said the ecosystem supported other animal species, such as reptiles, fish, crustaceans and seashells.

Human species

Mayor Doma said the people would be the biggest loser if efforts to save the mangrove forest failed.

Hundreds of families in Prieto Diaz, a fifth-class municipality (annual income: P7 million to P13 million), depend on the mangrove forest for livelihood, he said.

The LGU, in tandem with the DENR, has initiated at least six alternative livelihood projects like seaweed farming, shellcraft, crab fattening, nipa plantation, prawn culture and sale of propagules.

The DENR has declared the mangrove forest the pilot showcase for Bicol and has been attracting hundreds of tourists yearly.

Seamancor Eco-Developers have almost 200 members, most of them with families who derive livelihood from the mangrove forest.

One of its officers, Manuel Domdom, said town residents would earn more by selling food and offering services to visitors, while Seamancor members would serve as guides and lecturers.

For a boat ride for 10 passengers around the forest, a guide is paid P100, which includes boat rental, Domdom said.

Domdom said visitors from as far as Ilocos had been to the place and even bought mangrove seedlings, which were planted in their coastal towns.

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APEC PARTY-LIST OPPOSES THE IMPOSITION OF VAT ON ELECTRIC CO-OPS, IPPS AND THE NAPOCOR

The Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives (APEC) Party List is opposed to the proposal pending in Congress to impose the Value Added Tax on electric cooperatives, on the Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and on the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR). APEC warned that this will lead to a triple-whammy of price increases for the more than six million households that are part of the electric cooperatives' franchise areas.

1. The imposition of VAT on electric cooperatives will adversely affect the more than six million member-consumer-households.

VAT, as a tax on consumption, will constitute a pass-on charge to the member-consumers who are already affected by the ongoing rise in the prices of petroleum products and other basic commodities. Moreover, since electric cooperatives are operating on a non-profit basis, the cooperatives have no other recourse but to pass-on the VAT to their consumers in order to maintain their viability.

The imposition of a 12% VAT on electric cooperatives would mean an increase in electricity rates ranging from 50 centavos per kilowatt-hour to 84 centavos per kilowatt-hour. Residential consumers with a 100 kilowatt-hour consumption of electricity will have to pay an additional P50 to P85 monthly.

2. Subjecting electric cooperatives to VAT will affect the rural electrification program of the country.

The APEC Party-List further believes that the lifting of the VAT exemptions of electric cooperatives would hamper the cooperatives' ability to light up the remaining 3,068 un-energized barangays that are located mostly in the far-flung rural areas. This will further limit development in these areas for many more years to come.

3. Imposing a VAT on IPPs and the NAPOCOR will further compound the problems faced by electricity consumers nationwide.

The NAPOCOR disclosed that subjecting the government power generator and the IPPs to VAT will also raise the rates by an average of 44 centavos per kilowatt-hour nationwide. Subjecting NAPOCOR and the IPPs to a 12% VAT would mean a rate increase of 50 centavos per kilowatt-hour in Luzon, 39 centavos per kilowatt-hour in the Visayas and 27 centavos per kilowatt-hour in Mindanao. In the case of MERALCO, a 12% VAT would mean consumers will have to pay an additional 58 centavos per kilowatt-hour.

The NAPOCOR and the IPPs will have to pass these additional charges to electric cooperatives, which in turn, have no choice but to pass on the burden to their member-consumers. Subjecting electric cooperatives to VAT will result to a triple whammy of rate increases, as the VAT imposed on electric cooperatives will be passed on to the consumers on top of the additional charges imposed by the NAPOCOR and the IPPs.

In view of the foregoing, the APEC Party-List is calling on all Filipinos, especially the six million member-consumers of electric cooperatives nationwide to actively oppose the plan to lift the VAT exemptions of electric cooperatives, the NAPOCOR and the IPPs. It further calls on Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to stop the imposition of VAT on electric cooperatives, generation and supply companies to protect the electricity consumers.

NO TO ELECTRICITY RATES INCREASES ! NO TO VAT ON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ! NO TO VAT ON NAPOCOR AND IPPs !

Rep. Edgar L. Valdez
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MANIFESTO OF OPPOSITION TO THE LIFTING OF TAX-EXEMPTIONS OF CO-OPS

From the UNITED COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

We, the various cooperative organizations throughout the country, representing 31,000 operating primary co-ops composed of four million people, oppose the proposal of the Department of Finance (DoF) to remove the VAT exemptions on agricultural, electric, and all other cooperatives. We oppose the proposal to impose the gross receipts tax (GRT) on credit co-ops. These tax proposals of the DoF are unfair, punitive, inefficient, and regressive.

Imposing the VAT on co-op transactions with members means making members pay the VAT twice over. As consumers, we already pay the VAT in full when our co-op buys in our behalf. DoF refuses to understand that imposing the VAT on the redistribution by the co-op of the same goods and services to the members simply means making us, the members, pay the VAT twice over. This is unfair and inequitable. As members of agricultural co-ops, we pay the VAT when we collectively buy our inputs. Why should we pay the VAT again when our co-ops deliver the goods to us members?

Imposing the GRT on credit co-ops means taxing co-op members when they borrow from their own fund. The DoF refuses to understand that credit co-ops are not like banks. We deal only with members, receive share capital only from members, and provide credit only to members. In fact, government itself says we are not like banks when it refuses to include us (non-banks) in the coverage of the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) - yet it now reverses its stand when it comes to taxes. The imposition of the GRT on credit co-ops will only hamper the mission of the savings-and-credit co-ops to protect member-depositors from inflation, promote savings, and provide accessible and affordable credit. We denounce this unjust treatment of subjecting credit co-ops to the same taxes as private profit-oriented corporations.

Farmers also own co-op banks. The little tax break the farmer-owned co-op banks enjoy will be removed if our co-op banks are made to pay the taxes applicable to commercial banks. Given the already marginal situation of farmers, the additional tax burden will make their already dismal lives even worse.

Imposing the VAT on co-ops means penalizing small co-ops and the transparent and honest taxpayers. Co-ops of whatever type and nature already pay the VAT in full each time they buy goods and services. This is happening because our co-ops demand receipts on purchases, because we are under compulsion to be transparent in all our transactions, because our operations are done in our behalf, the members, and subject to scrutiny of all members who own and must govern the co-ops. By acting in the interest of members, co-ops also serve to collect taxes for the government.

"Big" co-ops of whatever type and nature are already liable for income and other taxes on their transactions with nonmembers. Sales by non-agricultural, non-electrical and non-credit co-ops with share capital contribution of each member exceeding P15,000 are already subject to VAT. Removing the tax exemption would result to the taxation of small co-ops. Our co-ops are required to withhold taxes on salaries and wages, honoraria, professional fees. We are already paying 20% final income tax on the interest earned from our co-ops' bank deposits. It is therefore unfair, even dishonest, for the DoF, who enjoy more hearing time from our Senators and House Representatives, to portray us, the cooperative movement, as unwilling to pay our share of the tax burden.

There are alternatives to meet the budget deficit. Government must enforce Article 62 of the Cooperative Code, respecting the non-taxability of co-ops dealing with members while collecting taxes on co-op transactions that are already not tax-exempt. Government must target the maximum revenue from sin taxes, income taxes from professionals and the self-employed, and windfall profit taxes on IPPs that cannot be passed on to consumers. Government must reform or privatize NAPOCOR, which is the single biggest contributor to the contingent liabilities of the government leading to the current fiscal crisis.

No to VAT and GRT on co-ops!

The attempt by the DoF to circumvent the proper tax treatment of co-ops and the tax exemptions of co-ops under Articles 61 and 62 of the Cooperative Code (RA 6938) is inefficient and misguided.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said she wants to raise the needed revenues to plug the fiscal hole without any particular preference over the method. If this is the case, why is the DoF picking on us?

We thank the House of Representatives, especially the Committee on Ways and Means, for their decision to preserve the tax incentives of co-ops. We appeal to the members of the Senate to likewise preserve the tax exemptions of co-ops under Section 109 of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997 (as amended). Retain the original provisions of Section 109 (r), (s), (t), and (u). Exclude co-ops from the coverage of Senate Bill No 1838 amending the National Internal Revenue Code.

Rep. Guillermo P. Cua
Party List - Co-op NATCCO Network Party

Rep. Leonila V. Chavez
Party List - BUTIL Farmers' Party

BUTIL Farmers' Party · Cooperative NATCCO Network Party (Coop-NATCCO) · Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives (APEC) · Philippine Cooperative Center (PCC) · Philippine Association of Workers' Co-operatives (PAWC) · Partidong Kooperatiba ng Pilipinas (PROKOOP)

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PAID ADVERTISEMENT

90-year-old priest saves street kids

From page A1

scavenge with their parents, scouring the streets and the garbage that overflows into them.

Other malnourished and stunted children beg on corners or dart in and out of the traffic selling trinkets, newspapers and cigarettes. They sleep in pushcarts, on streets or market floors, or squat along railway lines.

Whatever they are doing, these children are not in school. When survival is a daily struggle, education is a necessity few can afford.

Making school reality

These are the children who inspired Father Tritz some 30 years ago to set up the Educational Research and Development Assistance (Erda) Foundation that would make going to school a reality for some.

These are the souls whom Father Tritz—dubbed "the Mother Theresa of the Philippines"—believes he can save from a life of crime and deprivation.

"The only way for the very poor to break the vicious cycle of poverty is to get a proper education and skills training," he says. "After all, education is a basic human right."

In the beginning, the foundation's main role was to bring Metro Manila's street children back to the classroom but over the years it has grown and extended its reach beyond the city.

No one knows just how many children live in the streets of Manila. Some estimates say there could be as many as 700,000 in this metropolis of some 13 million people. Others say it is much less.

The United Nations Children's Fund recently claimed there were 12 million children living in "extreme" poverty—those living on less than one dollar (P55.05) a day—throughout the country, and an estimated 20,000 children, both male and female, work as prostitutes.

Since 1974

Since 1974, Father Tritz's foundation has supported impoverished children in public elementary schools by providing them with money for expenses, such as books, school materials, uniforms and transportation. Many did not have shoes or could not afford food during the school day.

Despite the foundation's help, a large number of children from poor families still dropped out of school. They were ashamed of their poverty.

Children as young as 6 turned to drugs or crime. "It broke my heart to see so many children resort to drugs and crime because they had nothing else to do, and little to hope for," says Father Tritz.

So in 1993, he established Erda Tech, a five-year technical vocational high school in Pandacan where students from the poorest families in Manila not only get a school education but training in a number of technical skills.

Vocational high school

Auto mechanics, welding, refrigeration and air conditioning, computer technology, food service and preparation, garment sewing and leather craft are all on the curriculum.

Last year, a six-month course in caregiving was introduced.

What makes this project different is that students spend their final year of high school in on-the-job training in local factories and companies. Frequently students are offered full-time employment during their work experience because of the sound work ethic developed while at Erda Tech.

Life-changing

In all, Father Tritz estimates some 200,000 students have passed through Erda's doors since he began the foundation with the help of some wealthy Filipinos. Father Tritz thinks most of the students left with hope and the belief that they can change the course of their lives.

Nick Sierva, an electrician in his early 20s, says he owes his life to the foundation. On the last year of a Master Electrician course at the local institute of science and technology, he is the only one from a family of 16 who has finished high school and has a regular job.

"I take it one step at a time," Sierva says. Without the help of Erda putting him through high school, "my life could have been a different story," he says.

Record school year

This school year is a record for Erda with an enrollment of 29,000 students who would otherwise be left out on the streets.

From its humble beginnings with four staff members and 200 students, the foundation today boasts of 90 full-time staff members, 36 teachers, and many more associates nationwide. It has a vast network of benefactors and friends worldwide.

Father Tritz, from Bouzonville in France, was 11 or 12 when he decided he wanted to devote his life to God and the Jesuits, one of the largest religious orders in the Catholic Church which has a centuries-old emphasis on global missionary work and education.

Something powerful

"There is something very powerful about the Jesuits," he says. "As a young boy I remember this Jesuit who came to our house to say Mass. He had been a missionary abroad and I guess his stories ignited a spark inside me that has never died.

"When I turned 19, I entered the Jesuit order—that was in 1933—and three years later I was in China as a missionary teaching."

Ordained in Shanghai in June 1947, Father Fritz arrived in Manila in 1950 as part of the exodus from Mao's Communist China. The Philippines had never figured in his plans but it has become his home for the past 50 years.

A new life

"All of a sudden, I found myself in a country I knew nothing about," Father Tritz recalls. But he soon mastered Filipino. With faith in divine will, he started a new life.

Father Tritz started out teaching in some of Manila's best universities but was constantly drawn to the streets.

"What opened my eyes was the large number of children who were forced to leave school through poverty even though elementary education was free. Many families could not afford the traditional expenses of uniforms and school books," he says.

One study conducted over a 10-year period from 1952 to 1963 showed that only 67 out of every 100 students who entered first grade reached fourth grade and only 40 reached sixth grade. In those days, Father Tritz would visit kids living in slums to encourage them to return to school.

Today, little has changed out in the streets.

The country's population, currently at 84 million, continues to grow at 2.3 percent a year. At this rate, population experts say the Philippine population will double within the next 30 years.

Living in hope

Even so, Father Tritz lives in hope. Much of his time is now spent raising funds to keep the foundation alive.

Over the years he has been the recipient of dozens of humanitarian awards for his work, including the prestigious Dr. Albert Schweitzer Prize from the Goethe Foundation of Bale, Switzerland, and the Legion of Honor awarded by France.

Setting up the foundation meant Father Tritz had to give up his French nationality and become a Filipino citizen.

The French government was aghast seeing a French national swearing an oath of allegiance to the dictator Ferdinand Marcos who imposed martial law a few years earlier. But all has been forgiven.

Fulfillment

Despite his awards, Father Tritz says it is the change he has managed to bring to thousands of street children that has filled his heart.

"Nothing gives me more pleasure than seeing children from the streets receiving an education and learning skills that will improve their lives," he says.

AFP

Stranger saves child

By Irene C. Perez

HAD IT NOT been for a stranger, four year-old boy Roise Jericho Alerama would have been crushed in the stampede out of the Glorietta shopping mall in Makati City.

"The man left my kid in a safe spot in front of Landmark," Alerama's father, Rowell Dano-og said. He looked for the man to thank him for carrying his son to safety but he never saw him again.

As soon as bomb exploded inside a bus outside the mall, hordes of people headed for the exit. Shops closed down in a rush, Dano-og said. He himself was pinned to the ground. And as he lay there, he asked people to save his child who was being crushed by the frantic crowd.

Dano-og, a lanky man, tried to secure his chubby boy with his free arm. His other arm has been in a cast for some weeks now as a result of a mauling incident in Taguig early this month.

"I was able to carry him and run," he said, "but I had to put him down because my arm hurt. When I carried him again, my injured arm cracked and I was not able to hold him anymore. I dropped him and I grimaced in pain on the floor."

Security guards manning the area took them to the Ospital ng Makati for treatment. The little boy suffered a broken leg.

Alerama "parks" his two plastic toy cars on his pillow. He would have loved to play outside and make the most out of the looming summer sun but he has to stay still in his hospital bed.

DOJ to Gringo . . .

From page A1

member George Duldulao, retired Col. Ernesto Macahiya of Bay, Laguna, a Colonel Briones, a retired Colonel Lazo and more than 1,000 other John and Jane Does, mostly members of the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc. (PGBI), a faction of the Guardians that Honasan leads.

The police filed the charges after its star witness, Maj. Perfecto Ragil, claimed that he was present when Honasan and members of the Magdalo group plotted to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ragil, a "communications expert" of the Presidential Security Group, claimed that he was present when Honasan met with Lt. Senior Grade Antonio Trillanes IV and other rebel officers in San Juan, Metro Manila, to plot the coup on July 27, 2003.

In his affidavit, Ragil said Honasan told the officers at the meeting in June 2003 that "we must use force, violence and armed struggle to achieve the vision of the NRP." Honasan was referring to his National Recovery Program, which the mutineers in Makati used as their "bible."

Honasan allegedly presented the plot to achieve the goals of the NRP by violently overthrowing the government and installing a junta.

"He further said that some of us will resign from military service and occupy civilian positions in the new government. He also said that it was urgent that we implement this plan and that we would be notified of the next activities," Ragil said.

After the discussion, Honasan allegedly led all those present in a blood compact.

"He led a prayer that sounded more like a pledge and we all recited it with raised arms and clenched fists. He then took a knife and demonstrated how to make a cut on the left upper inner arm until it bleeds," Ragil said.

"The cut was in the form of the letter 'I' of the old alphabet but was done in a way that it actually looked like letter 'H.' Then, he pressed his right thumb against the blood and pressed the thumb on the lower middle portion of the copy of the Prayer," Ragil said.

"(Honasan) then covered his thumbmark in blood with tape. He then pressed the cut on his left arm against the NRP flag and left (a) mark of letter 'I' on it. Everybody else followed," Ragil said.

Ragil said he did not like to participate in the rites but was forced to do so after hearing Honasan's alleged threat that those who would betray the plot would be killed.

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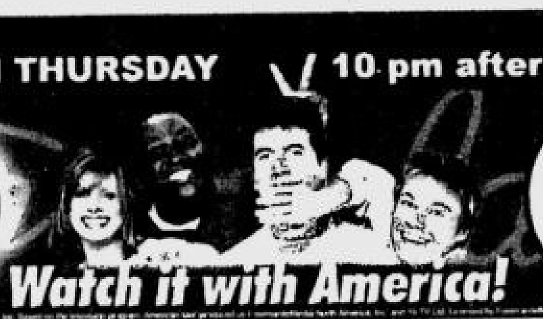

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Thursday, February 17, 2005

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Masked Rider Ryuki		Gatekeepers	TV Patrol		Spirits	Krystala	'Til Death Do Us Part	Hiram	Save The Last Dance	Mastasia Mo Kaya			Insider
NBN		Taiwan Winner TV Shopping		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision	Next Stop			Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Sinulog Festival					
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	PBA			PBA		Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol		Inq TV	
GMA 7		Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Joyride	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Knock Out	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin		Starstruck	Stairway To Heaven	Magpakailanman			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	Wrestling		NBA On RPN					Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Chowtime Na!		V League				Retro TV	IBC News Tonite	OPTV	EZ Shop
Solar		WWE Smackdown				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxxed	Dungeons And Dragons	Stargate SG1		Thunder Box		JAG		Tsui Hark's Vampire Hunters			
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Rugrats	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix						Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Presents		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Good Morning Miami	What I Like About You	The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	JKX	Ed		Girls Behaving Badly	Simple Life 2	Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Elimidate	Change of Heart
Cinema One		Talahib At Rosas 2				Vizconde Massacre				Boyong Mañalac (Hoodlum Terminator)		Jeannie, Bakit Ngayon Ka Lang				Sugatang Puso			
Studio 23	Bewitched	Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	UAAP				Batman Beyond	Project Arms	Wazzup Wazzup	America's Next Top Model	Barkada Nights				News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		Spin City
AXN		Nuremberg				Maximum Exposure		Samurai X	Samurai X	Beastmaster III		Now See This (Season II)	Now See This (Season II)	David Blaine Frozen In Time		Earth Vs. The Spider			
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		American Idol		Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol		The Chronicle: News From The Edge		Outback Jack		Friends	American Idol
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News		World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic				Secret China		Mummy Road Shows	Tales Of The Living Dead	The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Innovation		Scientific American Frontiers	
Solar Sports		IBF Korea Open '05			Greatest Classics				IBF Korea Open '05				NBA TV Daily	NBA Game Memphis @ Boston					NBA TV Daily
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds	Lifestyle		Arza		Road & Track	Back To Basics
HBO		That Old Feeling (3:15PM)				Jimmy Hollywood				The Ring (7:05 PM)				Lost In Translation			Minority Report (10:40PM)		
Star Movies			First Blood (3:45 PM)			Isby Goes Down (5:15 PM)				Good Morning Vietnam				Death Becomes Her			12 Monkeys (10:45PM)		
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Police Academy	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Static Shock	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Justice League Secret Origins	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Codename: Kids Next Door	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	Boomerang: The Superfriends	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN				Atlantic Coast Conf. Duke vs Maryland				Atlantic Coast Conf. Virginia vs. N'th Carolina				Sportscenter Asia	Pool/Snooker Mosconi Cup '04		Atlantic Coast Conf. Virginia vs. N'th Carolina				Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	The Sleepover Club	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Lilo & Stitch/Untalkative Bunny	An American Tail II: Fievel Goes West			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Going To The Mat	
Cinemax			The Screaming Room, Dracula Goes To Hollywood	Ironweed					Subterano (6:20 PM)			Dead In the Water			Detonator			Owning Mahowny	
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Cleopatra Part2				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Judging Amy		Strong Medicine		Loves Enduring Promise			Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye		Judging Amy (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia				Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Extreme Engineering		Ultimate Cars	Building The Ultimate	Wild Scenes		Ultimate Discovery		Power Zone	
MTV Philippines			Hangin Out at MTV		MTV Most Wanted		TRL		MTV Ask: The Dawn	MTV Dyes		Battle of Ozzfest	One Bad Trip	Wildboyz	Cribs	MTV Fashionista	MTV Urban Beats	VH1 Video Collections	
Sports Plus	AT&T Pebble Beach Nat'l Pro-AM Day4							Italian Serie A Highlight Program		Pac 10 Arizona @ UCLA Nat'l					You've Got to See This	Nascar Bud-weiser Shootout Daytona Int'l Spdway			
EWTN	A Christian Pilgrimage To Jordan	Angelus (3:15PM)	Suffering Church	Angel Force	Children's Rosary	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	The Spirit Of Catholic Leadership	Saints: A Closer Look	EWTN Gallery	EWTN Live With Father Mitch Pacwa		Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Council Of Faith	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	Holy Spirit In The Church	The Journey Home	

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Only bad elements should be afraid

By Christian V. Esguerra, Luige A. del Puerto and Norman Bordadora

IF YOU'RE no terrorist, relax.

The Salaam Police yesterday gave this piece of advice to Muslims wary that Monday's bomb attacks might trigger more harassments and arrests.

"Why would they be afraid if they have nothing to do with terrorists?" Senior Supt. Sahiron Salim asked in a phone interview with the INQUIRER.

Salim heads the Salaam Police, a special police unit composed of Muslims. It was created to ensure that Muslims are protected against possible abuses during police and military operations.

"We assure our Muslim brothers and sisters that we will protect them as long as they have no ties with terrorists," Salim said.

For Muslims to avoid any trouble, Salim said it's always best that they strictly live by the tenets of Islam.

For his part, Chief Supt. Wilfredo Garcia, head of the Southern Police District, said there would be no crackdowns in Muslim communities as a consequence of Monday's terrorist attack.

"We will not conduct a raid if the Salaam Police is not with us," he said.

Meanwhile, Leonardo Ahmed Ricalde, one of the suspects in the alleged aborted plan to bomb the Feast of the Black Nazarene in January yesterday decried the perceived public condemnation of Muslims following the recent spate of bombings.

Ricalde said no one condemned Christians after the military accidentally killed a pregnant woman in one of its recent raids in Sulu province.

The raids in Sulu were done by government forces, while the bombings were owned by the Abu Sayyaf, which claimed to be "defenders of Islam."

Bus marshals deployed on Edsa

By Christian Esguerra, Edson Tandoc Jr., Margaux Ortiz, Tina Santos and Nancy Carvajal

THE PHILIPPINE National Police has begun deploying bus marshals to prevent a repeat of the bomb attack on a passenger bus in Makati City on Valentine's Day.

Thirty uniformed policemen hopped on 30 different buses plying Edsa as early as 6 a.m. yesterday as part of the Philippine National Police's security efforts, according to Director Avelino Razon Jr., National Capital Region Police chief.

Marshals would be working on two shifts: from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. for the first shift, and from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m for the second.

One handicap of this security measure is the lack of police officers, Razon said. There are 3,000 buses plying Edsa.

The NCRPO has only around 15,000 men tasked to provide consistent police visibility and secure vital installations to thwart any terrorist attack.

Since the police cannot provide all buses with marshals, Razon said the NCRPO would choose the "lucky" buses at random.

PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay on Tuesday advised the public to be more watchful of possible terrorists by reporting suspicious-looking people and unattended bags and boxes to the police.

Reports may be coursed through Patrol 117, PNP Text 2920, and Aglipay's personal line: 0917-8131310.

More policemen would also be posted in bus terminals and other pickup points. In northern Metro Manila for instance, the Northern Police District adjusted its deployment of police visibility patrols by deploying more policemen in areas were bus passengers commonly converge, according to District Director Noe Wong.

Fixed police visibility points would also be set up in common loading and unloading areas on Quirino Highway, Edsa and Samson Road, C3 Road and Rizal Avenue in Caloocan City, Road 10 in Navotas and MacArthur Highway in Valenzuela City.

Similar visibility points have been put up all over the metropolis.

The Central Police District has also tightened security in vital installations in Quezon City to prevent a bomb attack similar to that in Makati City that left three people dead.

These areas include shopping centers, government offices, bus terminals, Light Rail Transit and Metro Rail Transit terminals and other busy areas.

A senior police official added that they had also increased police visibility in public markets after receiving intelligence reports saying these could be the next target of terrorist groups.

These markets are Commonwealth Market on Commonwealth Avenue, Farmers Market in Cubao, Nepa Q-Mart along Edsa and Clover Leaf in Balintawak, the official said.

CPD policemen also assured the public that mobile patrol and foot patrol operations have also been intensified.

Station commanders were also ordered to conduct dialogues and to coordinate with security personnel of various establishments in the city about security measures in their respective areas.

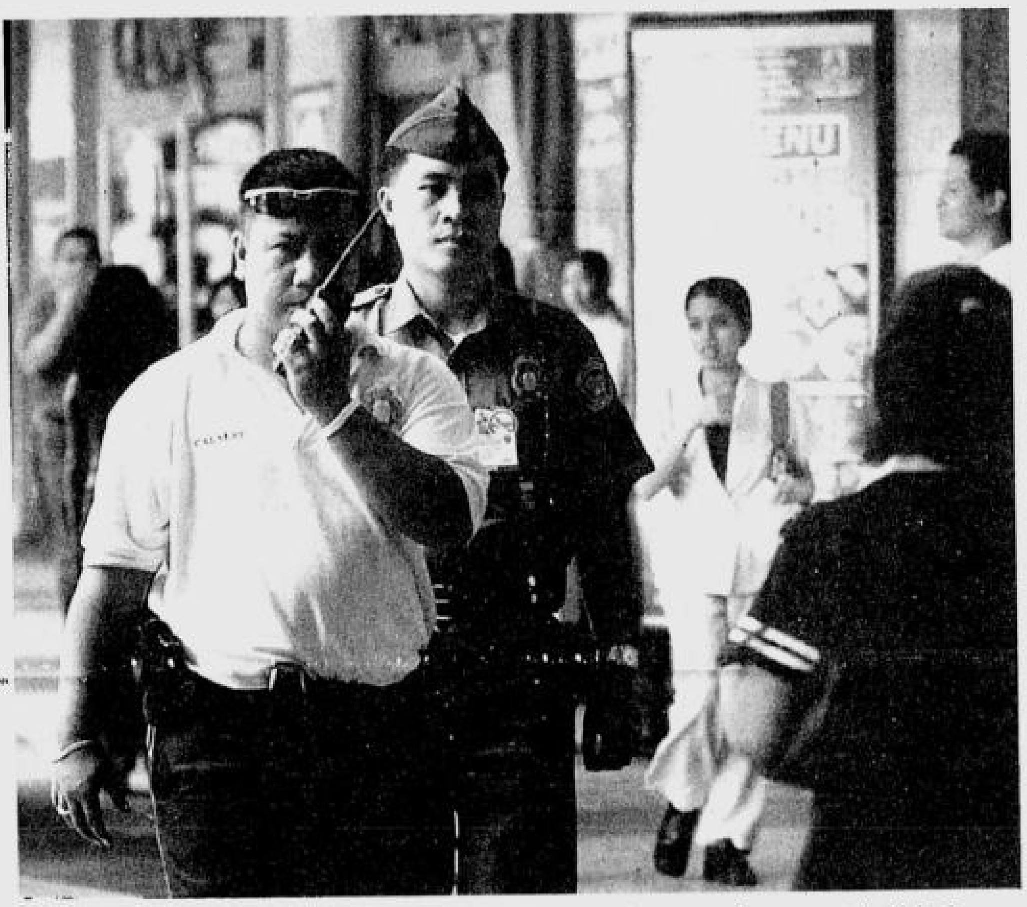
Barangay officials were also tasked to work with policemen in keeping an eye on their areas of responsibility.

Meanwhile, devotees of the Mother of Perpetual Help at the Redemptorist Church in Baclaran yesterday allowed police to inspect their bags and other belongings, according to Parañaque police chief Supt. Ronald Estilles.

"They said that they would feel safer if we could do it everyday," he said.

Estilles added that the security of the close to a million devotees that troop to the church every Wednesday is a big concern. But despite the bomb scare, the church was full, he said.

The police chief said 35 policemen and 26 Marines were deployed in the area as part of the PNP's security efforts.



ON PATROL in Makati City, two policemen provide security to shoppers and patrons at the Makati Central Business District, two days after alleged Abu Sayyaf terrorists placed a bomb on a bus. AFP

Manila ports to get X-ray machines

By Leila B. Salaverria

FACED with the renewed threat of terrorism, X-ray machines will be installed at the Manila North and South Harbors to augment the current security setup in the Port of Manila, the Coast Guard said yesterday.

The Department of Transportation and Communication will provide the machines, which are expected to arrive this March, according to Coast Guard spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo.

"The timing of the machines' arrival is very good," said Balilo.

He added, "It will complement the existing security setup. This is a big boost to our antiterrorism campaign."

Balilo said the port in Manila would be among eight major ports in the country to get the machines, which would be similar to those used in the country's airports.

The X-ray machines can be used to check cargo and luggage for firearms, deadly weapons, bombs and even illegal drugs.

Balilo said he was still unaware of the specific ports where the X-ray machines would be placed.

He said the X-ray machines would be a big help to port authorities because the peak season for sea travel, which is the summer months beginning March, is fast approaching.

After the Valentine's Day bombings in the cities of Makati, Davao and General Santos that left at least seven people dead, authorities have begun beefing up security in public places and installations.

Among the establishments in Manila receiving extra attention are the Malacañang Palace, the United States embassy, Pandacan oil depot, shopping malls and LRT stations.

A platoon of Marines in full battle gear was sent to the port area on Tuesday to augment the Coast Guard's marshals and K-9 units in inspecting the passengers and baggage aboard sea vessels.

Wife gets protection from El Presidente

THE MUNTINLUPA Regional Trial Court has banned for 30 days former basketball superstar Ramon "El Presidente" Fernandez from threatening or even going near his wife, Maria Socorro, and four children.

In a three-page Temporary Protection Order dated Feb. 15, Judge Philip Aguinaldo of Branch 207 directed Fernandez to stay away from their house at 216 Lipa St., Ayala Alabang, and from the house being used by his family.

Fernandez, whom his wife had accused of having an extramarital affair and of physical abuse, was also barred from going to places where his wife and her children usually go.

But while the court limited his contact with Maria Socorro and their children, Aguinaldo ordered Fernandez to allow her to use a family car and other belongings.

On top of these, the court told the former cager to give his wife and children P360,000 a month as support and to pay for the rent of the house currently being rented by them. At the same time, Fernandez was ordered to see to their medical and educational needs.

The court also ordered Fernandez to post a P1 million bond to ensure full compliance of the order. *Nancy C. Carvajal*

Unleash 'dogs of war' on Moros

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

IF PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo was serious about wiping out the remnants of the Abu Sayyaf, she should unleash the Marines against them.

The Marines, who proudly claim to be "dogs of war," have a reason to fight ferociously in the renewed hostilities in Sulu.

Marines want to avenge the death of more than a dozen fellow Marines who were killed in an ambush in the early hours of the new skirmishes.

The Marines will just be too happy to obey "search and destroy" orders against the Abu Sayyaf terrorists and their protectors in the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The fighting Marines would be GMA's Valentine's gift to the Abu Sayyaf.

***

Had the Southern Command chief been a Marine, the reaction to the attacks on government troops last week would have been swift and decisive.

There would have no ifs, ands or buts, only "let's do it" from the Marine general if he were the Southcom chief.

Sending of reinforcements to beleaguered troops in Sulu came two days after the breakout of hostilities.

The reinforcements came from Zamboanga City.

It took a Navy ship more than 24 hours to reach Sulu.

The President should consider replacing the present Southcom chief, an Army general, with a Marine general or Navy admiral.

The Philippine Marine Corps is under the Navy.

By the way, a military officer close to me asked me to tell the President this: *"Mahina ang diskarte ni* (Lt. Gen. Alberto) Braganza.

"Kailangan siyang palitan ng mas alisto at agresibo (Braganza is indecisive, he should be replaced by someone snappier and more aggressive)."

I think that also goes true for the Armed Forces chief of staff.

***

By the way, why should our government tell Islamic countries that the renewed war in the South is not being waged against Muslim Filipinos but is a war against terrorists?

Why should the government ask for the permission of Muslim countries to attack terrorist strongholds in Sulu?

Ano ba ang pakialam nila sa gulo natin?

***

A Viva Hot Babes dancer has accused Zambales Rep. Antonio Diaz of forcibly kissing and mashing her while asking her to have sex with him during a party at his beach house in the province.

Ana Leah Javier said she didn't give in to the congressman's carnal desires because he was *"amoy lupa na"* (smelled like dust).

This means that the congressman is old enough to be a cemetery resident.

He is 77.

But a lot of people wonder why the congressman is still sexually active, given his advanced age.

Probably because he eats lots and lots of sashimi and sushi.

A couple of years ago, Diaz was in the news because he spent hundreds of thousands of pesos in government money at a Japanese restaurant in three months.

VALENZUELA GRIDLOCK

Heavy traffic bad for business

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

IT'S NOT only motorists who are annoyed.

The heavy traffic at the MacArthur Highway, aggravated by the rise in toll rates at the rehabilitated North Luzon Expressway, is starting to give private investors second thoughts about doing business in Valenzuela City, Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Because the city serves as the gateway to Northern Luzon, it has become an ideal site for factories and warehouses.

The narrow MacArthur Highway, which passes through Valenzuela City to parts of Bulacan and Pampanga, has become an alternative route for motorists who refuse to pay the steep toll at the expressway.

"Some trading houses are threatening to move their warehouses to Quezon City where they will not have to pass through the expressway or MacArthur Highway," the mayor said, adding that this would result in revenue and job losses for the city.

Because many motorists now use MacArthur Highway, some residents in Valenzuela City are either trapped in traffic or are forced to use the expressway instead, Gatchalian added.

The volume of vehicles passing through the busy highway had already tripled since the toll increase, according to Caloocan City public safety and traffic management chief Al Sta. Maria.

The long stretch of MacArthur Highway begins in Caloocan City and extends to parts of the cities of Malabon and Valenzuela, and to the provinces of Bulacan and Pampanga.

Sta. Maria said passenger jeeps going to Bulacan, which used to pass the expressway, have started using the highway, entering through the Monumento area.

MANDALUYONG
18
22

MANDALUYONG BEAUTIES

Mandaluyong Mayor Neptali M. Gonzales II (far left) and First Lady Queenie Gonzales (far right), pose with winners of the Miss Mandaluyong 2005 during the pageant's coronation night on Feb. 7 at the city gymnasium. Shown from left are: third runner-up Anna Vanessa L. Villanueva, first runner-up April Rose P. Wong, Miss Mandaluyong 2005 Xaviera S. Iglesias, second runner-up Charmagne S. De Guzman, and fourth runner-up Paula Junne Y. Ruiz.

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Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Mangulat

GOLF: Asian Tour 2005—Malaysian Open; 3:30 p.m. (r-11:30 p.m.); STAR Sports—Angelo Que begins his quest for a second Asian title.

BASKETBALL: US NCAA—Virginia vs North Carolina, 8 a.m. (r-6 p.m.); Duke vs Maryland; 4 p.m. (r); ESPN—Witness a pair of explosive ACC encounters.

NBA—Grizzlies vs Celtics; 8 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports—Memphis tries not to sing the blues when they take on Boston at the Fleet Center.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

DOJ to press extradition case vs Asi, says Gonzalez

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE GOVERNMENT will ask the Court of Appeals to set oral arguments on the extradition case of Asi Taulava so that it could present documents from the US Embassy that allegedly prove the Talk 'N Text player is an American citizen, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

Gonzalez made the move in response to a claim by Taulava's lawyer that the US embassy documents were "rehashed" and had been "presented, considered and rejected in 2004, on the strength of pieces of evidence that were submitted by Taulava."

Gonzalez said he would order Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo to ask the appellate court to set oral arguments so that the DOJ could fully present its case.

"I will instruct (Benipayo) to submit these documents. The case is now with the Court of Appeals so what can be done now is to have oral arguments," Gonzalez said.

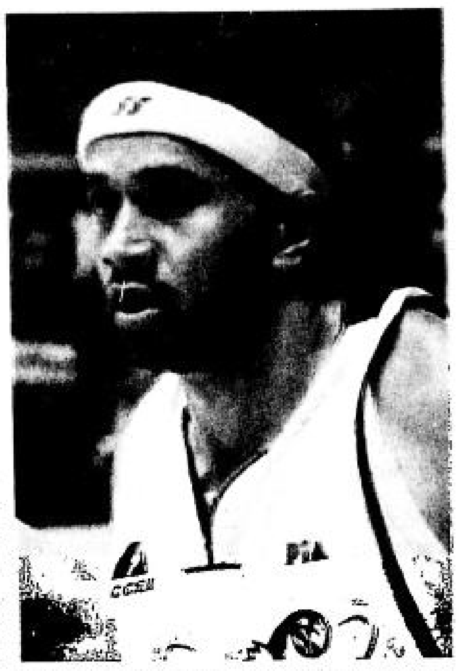
He said the government had earlier asked the appellate court to overturn a Manila judge's permanent injunction against Taulava's extradition. The DOJ in October last year concluded that Taulava and five other PBA players had faked their Filipino citizenship.

On Tuesday, Gonzalez said the US Embassy in Manila had informed the National Bureau of Investigation that Taulava was a permanent resident of the United States, and is therefore not a Filipino.

Gonzalez said US acting immigration attache Julian Briola informed the NBI in May 2004 that Taulava and her mother, Pauline Mateaki, were both permanent US residents.

But lawyer Eduardo Francisco, Taulava's counsel, said his client had already submitted evidence as early as June last year attesting that his mother was born in Samar, and not in Tonga.

"If they have the documents, fine. Why don't they bring it to court for a thorough judicial scrutiny instead of subjecting Asi to trial by publicity?" he added.



TAULAVA: US permanent resident REM ZAMORA

UAAP vs NC teams

SEEDED teams from the University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) will square off today in the Collegiate Champions Cup at the Letran Gym.

University of the East will battle San Beda at 2 p.m., while University of the Philippines will clash with Letran at 4 p.m.

Expected to lead the Warriors, fourth in last year's UAAP, are 2004 Rookie of the Year Marcy Arellano, Paolo Hubalde, slam-dunk champion KG Canaleta, Earn Saguindel and RJ Masbang.

The San Beda Lions similarly made a strong impression when they entered the NCAA Final Four after stunning the multi-titled San Sebastian Stags last year.

The Lions remained in contention in this knockout-style tournament after outclassing National Athletic Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (Naascu) champion University of Manila, 85-79, last Saturday.

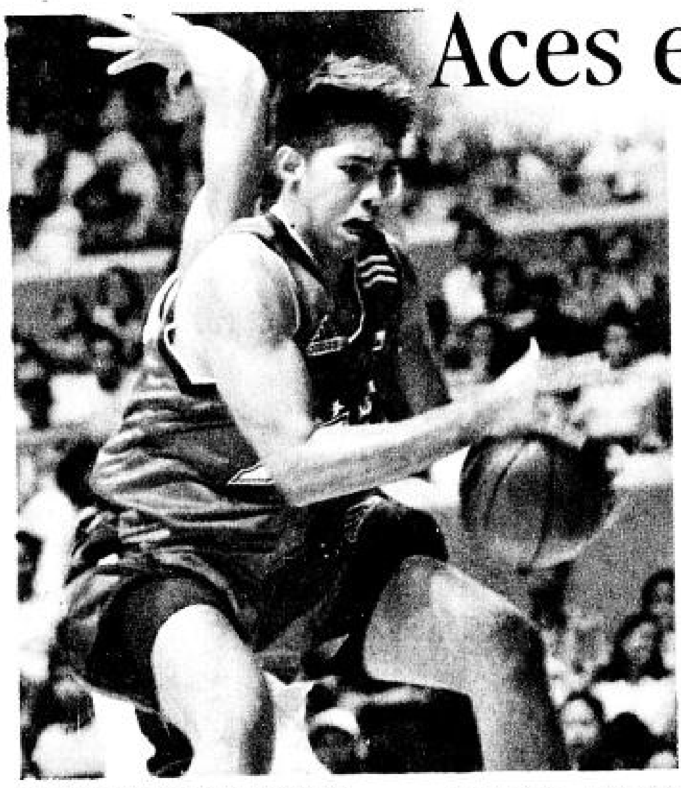
Jerome Paterno led SBC with 24 points and 20 rebounds, but the Lions also got ample support from Jeff Bombeo, Arjun Cordero and Yousif Aljamal.

UP, a last-minute replacement for the UAAP champion De La Salle Archers, also scored an upset over National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) champion Emilio Aguinaldo College Generals, 78-55.

Toti Almeda, Josant Cervantes and Nestor David paced the Maroons.

The Letran Knights, who might miss ace guard Ronjay Enrile in the tournament, will lean on Mark Andaya, Boyet Bautista, Aaron Aban and JP Alcaraz.

Jasmine W. Payo



ALLADO: Testing his market value PDI PHOTO

Aces eye juicier trade for Allado

By June Navarro

COCA-COLA is already sold on swapping Poch Juinio for Don Allado but it seems Alaska is looking for a more viable investment.

League sources yesterday revealed that the Aces are trying to work out separate juicier deals with the Shell Turbochargers, FedEx Express and the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals with the highest bidder snagging the 6-foot-6 Allado on the trading block.

The Phone Pals are entertaining thoughts of giving up the 6-foot-9 Yancy De Ocampo for Allado while the Express have several trade options in mind, including sending John Ferriols to the Aces.

As for the Turbochargers, Billy Mamaril could be on his way to a third PBA team in just two years if and when the Aces bite the trade bait, which also includes Chris Calaguio in the package, a reliable source said.

After the Aces were eliminated in the quarterfinals of the recent Philippine Cup, Allado, a former UAAP MVP out of La Salle, announced his desire to shop for another team before the start of the second conference on March 4.

Allado, whose contract is about to expire next month, has a standing maximum-salary offer from the Aces for at least three years but decided to test his market value instead.

Meanwhile, Sta. Lucia Realty's Dennis Espino backed out of the Philippine team tryouts citing personal reasons.

SEAG preparations lag behind

By Jasmine W. Payo

PHILIPPINE Sports Commission officer-in-charge Butch Ramirez admitted yesterday that the Philippines is behind schedule in its preparation for staging the 2005 Southeast Asian Games on Nov. 27-Dec. 5.

"We're falling behind schedule," said Ramirez. "But Filipinos are good at catching up. I'm confident that everything will fall into place by the second quarter of the year."

But Cebu City Sports commission chair Jonathan Guardo assured yesterday that his city is right on track in its end of the hosting chores.

Bacolod and Subic are the other venues with Metro Manila as main hub.

"Everything has been smooth sailing so far," said Guardo, whose province will host judo, karatedo, taekwondo, mountain bike, sepak takraw, pencak silat and dance sport.

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NBA RADIO

LA CLIPPERS @ MIAMI HEAT 8:30 am

Eagle Ridge slates scramble, putting tournaments

THE EAGLE Ridge Golf and Country Club is set to stage two tournaments with exciting formats for its members that will start a monthly series of events at the country's largest golf club in Gen. Trias, Cavite. Exploding this Sunday is the two-man scramble with team handicap applied at the Faldo course, one of the four championship layouts of Eagle Ridge. Tee-off is shotgun style at 7:30 a.m.

Scramble entries will be classified according to their determined handicaps. These will be the sum of 50 percent of the lower handicap and 20 percent of the higher handicap.

Division I will be composed of the first 25 percent of the field based on scores, Division II the middle 30 percent and Division III the remaining 45 percent. The men will tee off from the white tees and the ladies from the red.

The top three finishers in each division and the team posting the lowest gross will win prizes in the tourney which also stakes a Cobra golf set for a hole-in-one.

Tournament fee is P1,000 per team inclusive of giveaways, buffet lunch and raffle ticket.

Slated in March is the Eagle Ridge-Titleist Putting Challenge to be held at the club's practice greens.

There will be qualifying rounds on March 5 and 6 with the finals featuring the top 32 qualifiers set on March 19.

Korean foils 2 locals, tops Samsung golfest

By Musong R. Castillo

LIPA City—Korean Kim Chang-hoi kept his cool despite a near breakdown early in the final round yesterday, shooting a four-over 76 which proved enough to win the third Samsung Amateur Golf Tour Finals by a stroke over two local hotshots.

The 18-year-old lost a three-shot overnight lead after 11 holes, but played the final seven level for a 291 total as Jun Bernis and Jay Bayron settled for a tie for second after muffing close birdie putts on the 72nd hole of Club Malarayat.

A resident of the country the last eight years, Kim made the turn at 39 after bogeys on 1, 2 and 8. He dropped another shot on the 10th and fell out of the lead as Bayron birdied the 11th.

But instead of crumbling, Kim went on attack mode to secure the biggest win of his career.

"I just played my game," Kim said in halting English. "I did not think of what happened (earlier) because by doing that, I would not be able to win."

Bayron and Bernis, who turned in a 72 and a 71, respectively, for 292, both bogeyed the par-4 12th, and a routine par for Kim pulled him level again with Bayron.

Bayron, who paid dearly for shooting at and missing the 12th pin, which was tucked behind a huge bunker guarding the front of the green, also bogeyed the 15th and the 16th.

He had an eight-foot putt for birdie on the final hole, but was two rolls short.

Bernis, meanwhile, had a different finish.

After bungling a three-foot putt to save par on the 12th, the reigning RP Amateur champion birdied the 15th and the 17th in the flight ahead, but missed forging a playoff by hitting a 12-foot putt for birdie long and wide on the 18th.

"*Talagang para sa kanya* (It's really for him)," said Bernis, who rallied to beat Kim in the DHL Amateur Open early last year.

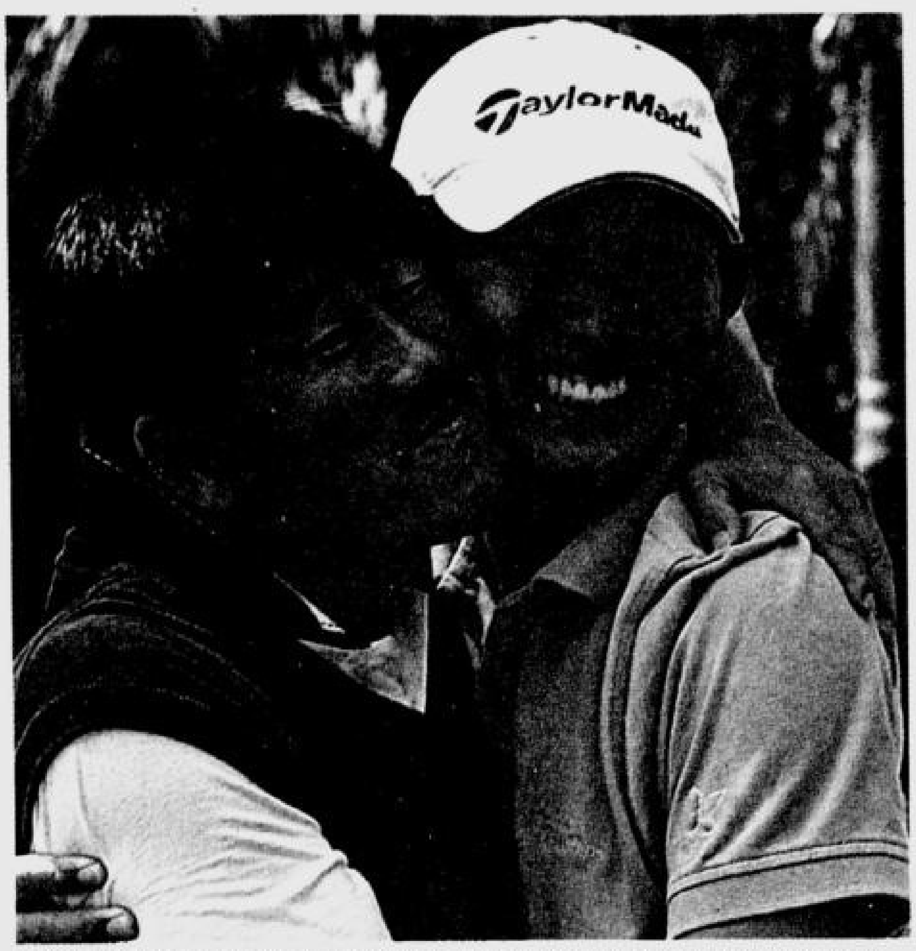
Boyet Saragoza signed for a 79 and finished fourth at 297, while Raymund Sangil posted a second straight 74 and brought up the rear of the compact champions' field with a 301.

The event is also sponsored by Tokyo Tokyo, Gatorade, adidas TaylorMade, KZG by Custom Clubmakers, Pink Patio Boracay, Coppertone Sport, and Rogin-E with Philippine Airlines as the official carrier and Malarayat Inn as the official hotel. Killer-Bee, Jam 88.3, Wave 89.1, Magic 89.9, 99.5 RT and 103.5 K-Lite are media partners.

Meanwhile, Jun Jun Grandeza shot a 75 and nipped IG Gutierrez for the Class A plum with a 153 total. Gutierrez turned in a fat 80 for a 158, a shot ahead of third-placed Noel Lopez, who also shot an 80.

Dino Yap signed for an 82 like Melanio Siao but still went home with the Class B plum with a 165. Siao turned in an 85 in the first round to finish second with a 167, one ahead of Jeff Matic (80).

Allan Alegre submitted a 73 and rallied from six shots down to claim Class C honors over joint first-round leaders Art Dela Fuente and Raul Molintas with a 162 tally.



KIM Chang-hoi is hugged by his father Kim Jae kwang after winning the Samsung Amateur Golf Championship at Club Malarayat in Batangas. ROMY HOMILLADA

SPORTSWATCH

Mendoza clinches fencing bronze

WALLY Mendoza captured the bronze at the elite Saber World Cup Championship in Bangkok Saturday, becoming the first Filipino medalist in a world class A fencing competition. Mendoza capped an amazing string of upsets with a 15-14 conquest of Tamas Decsi of sabre world powerhouse Hungary in the quarterfinals to assure himself of the bronze. In the semifinals, he lost to Athens Olympic silver medalist and world No. 2 Hungarian Zsolt Nemcsik, who eventually won the tournament. The 26-year-old Mendoza, back-to-back SEA Games gold medalist in individual sabre, bested China Chen Feng, 15-13, and Iran's Darvishijani, 15-12, en route to his bronze medal finish. Narrowly missing a slot in last year's Olympics, he has proved his worth as a world-class fencer with his victory in the World Cup, and has firmed his bid to go for a record three straight SEAG title. Mendoza will be competing in the Sabre Class A Championships in Seoul, Korea, this weekend.

C. Luzon entries dominate dog show

CENTRAL Luzon German Shepherd Dog Association (CLGSDA) dominated the First Gentleman's Cup-SLGSDA Landesgruppen Dog Show held at Filinvest Alabang over the weekend. Relli Fixfrutta was adjudged as the overall winner in the female 24 months and over category in the one-day dog competition organized by the Southern Luzon German Shepherd Dog Association (SLGSDA) and sponsored by the First Gentleman Foundation. Owned by top breeder Eric Miranda and Tony de los Santos, the four-year-old daughter of Aranyvolgyi Orseg and Kimberlie Fixfrutta bested 16 other entries in the event. Herr Wilhelm Nordsieck of Germany was the judge.

Cycling execs take center stage

EMPHASIS will be on teamwork when the Master's Cup road race series fires off in Angeles City, Pampanga, this Saturday with the country's top cycling executives and their employees competing. Fourteen of the 18 men's teams plus one ladies squad are seeing action in this unique amateur team competition that gathers cycling buffs from the corporate world as well as regular employees whose passion for riding spurred them to bond together and put up this weekend-only racing. Sen. Pia Cayetano, a noted cycling enthusiast, heads the lone lady squad raring to slug it out with the men's teams for pride, prestige and honor although she would not be around for this weekend's racing due to a previous commitment. The Saturday-Sunday races from Angeles City to Olongapo and back offer a 14-race, two-division event spread over nine months culminating in the Baguio run in November.

San Beda Grand Inaugural golfest

THE SAN Beda Law Golf Club Inc., through its president, lawyer Plaridel J. Bohol II, will hold its Grand Inaugural Tournament on Feb. 18 at the Philippine Navy Golf Club. Registration starts at 10 a.m. Tee-off time is from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Awarding and fellowship will follow at the 19th hole at 5 p.m. The tournament is aimed to raise funds for the San Beda Legal Aid Clinic headed by its president, lawyer Sixto Brillantes, the president of the San Beda Law Alumni Association. Globe Phils. leads the tournament sponsors. Participants are encouraged to wear red and white golf shirts.

St. Stephen takes series opener

DEFENDING champion St. Stephen High was tested to the hilt before warding off Xavier School, 94-81, yesterday in Game One of the 29th Hitachi-Metro Manila Tiong Lian Basketball League best-of-three championship series at the Chiang Kai Shek Gym. Six-foot four Kish Co, who unraveled an amazing performance of 21 points, nine rebounds and eight blocked shots, hit six points down the last three minutes to put St. Stephen a win shy of the title. Woodward John Co banged in two freethrows off Anthony Galongca in the last 28.7 seconds to send the match into overtime, 68-68. Kish Co drilled in a buzzer-beating lay-up to send the match into second overtime. Charles Oliver Genato hit a jumper in the last three seconds to make it 79-all and forge the third extra period. Cliff Aparicio led St. Stephen with 25 points. Game 2 is being played at presstime. Highlights of Game 1 will be aired over IBC-13 on Sunday, 3-5 p.m.

NCA 7-Cock Derby championship on

TWO unheralded entries—Thunderbird Firefly II and Wow Agsur Arnis Master I—lead the qualifiers in today's championship round of the National Cockers Association (NCA) 7-Cock Derby at the 17,000-seat Araneta Coliseum. Thunderbird Firefly II of Big Dome owner Jorge "Nene" Araneta, who fielded the typical Ray Alexander Roundhead with Whitehackle blood, was the first to score three impressive wins in a night dominated by longshot entries. Then, Rep. Ompong Plaza and Raymond Velayo's Wow Agsur Arnis Master I made the day of the underdogs by scoring three more wins. Pol Estrellado and Boy Royo's PEBR Complexor 3000 Mulawin tallied 2.5 points. Meanwhile, preparations are under way for the screening and wingbanding of cockerels in connection with the NCA stagfighting season in September. Cockers and breeders are reminded to submit their cockerel anytime from March 1-31. For screening, contact 911-2928 and 911-3101 (look for for Dong Lamuste or Gloria Avena).

Super Ulutan starts today

THREE days of cockfighting action starts at 8 a.m. today at the air-conditioned Las Piñas Coliseum via the "Super 2-Cock Ulutan/Fastest Kill Challenge." Over a hundred participants are seeing action in the event sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. Participants may also field entries tomorrow and on Saturday, according to hosts Abu Centeno and Renato Shio. At stake is a guaranteed prize of P1.3 million for an entry fee of P3,300. The fastest kill champion will win a brand-new house and lot located near SM Bacoor, courtesy of VA Aguilar Properties. The second placer gets P100,000; third, P50,000; fourth, P35,000; fifth, P30,000; sixth to 20th, P5,000 and slowest win, P10,000. Coliseum manager Alex Tobias said the combined winning time of each champion will be the basis in choosing the winners. Meanwhile, the fourth leg of "Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) 7-Cock Derby" unfolds on Feb. 21 and 23. Tony Lasala (NML SP) ruled the third leg on Feb. 7 and 9 with a perfect seven points. For inquiries, call 873-1040 and 874-3910.

A day in the life

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE DAY began with a big promise. Blue sky. Blades of grass still kissed by dew. Birds very much alive as they flirtatiously chirped while flying from twigs to branches to open air. An eagle hovered nearby, its brown wingspan almost as wide as a body jet. The sun was at its radiant best.

Ah, this is life.

You couldn't have a more beautiful morning than this.

And you are in faraway Cagayan de Oro City, the so-called golden city of friendship. It is said that over here, terrorism doesn't exist.

It's ironic: Abu Sayyaf lives here. And blood doesn't spill here.

If, indeed, this is Abu Sayyaf lair, residents don't give a hoot.

Residents take pride in saying this city is R & R area of Abu Sayyaf.

Welcome to Neverland—never see any kind of bomb-related violence.

And so, this morning, Alice Andrada, Iligan City's undisputed most famous woman, was set to play golf at Pueblo de Oro, a par-72 hole of world-class caliber. She had been looking forward to this day, the 18-hole aperitif of the fabled Southern Ladies Open. Called the Lam-Am, the format called for a lady amateur to be paired with a local celebrity or a major supporter of the Southern Ladies Open. It kicks off the Southern Ladies Open that tees off today some 70 female parbusters from all over the archipelago, starting at 7 a.m.

"Now I can relax," said Alice. "My baby is off to another plane. Please tell Tom (Garcia) thank you for lending us his Crosswind tomorrow for our trip to Iligan."

The Southern Ladies Open, the country's only tournament for female golfers established some 40 years ago by the National Golf Association of the Philippines, has been as strong mainly because of Alice. As an NGAP director for years now, Alice it is who keeps the spark to make the Southern Ladies Open a-burning each year.

This morning, Alice was in a foursome with Jake Ayson, Samsung champion Lina de Guzman and me. OK, you guessed it right: Alice and Jake were partners and Lina, a many-time national player, was paired with me.

Despite a minor hitch as Jake and I came in late due to a traffic snarl at the infamous bridge of the city going toward the Lumbia Airport, we went along fine. And, although Alice made what she called a "Big Siet-eh" on No. 1—a result of the long wait at the first tee that somehow almost got her goat—everything would soon come out fine.

Lina had her birdies and Alice her pars, and Jake and I our bogeys.

After seven holes, though, Alice had to call it quits.

"If I don't stop, the heat might kill me," said Alice.

We had to accede. We teed off past 9. By 11, the sun had transformed into a huge ball of fire—almost literally. The eagle hovering nearby seemed fagged out itself as I saw it trying to make a quick dip at a man-made lagoon.

"I used to see a lot of eagles in my beloved Arayat (Pampanga)," said Jake, sixty-ish, suddenly turning nostalgic. "I miss the good old days of my youth."

"There used to be an eagle, too, in my house in Iligan," said Alice, seventy-ish, also suddenly turning nostalgic. "It died of old age. But now I have a snake."

"A boa constrictor I must assume," said Jake.

"Yes," said Alice.

"Good," said Jake. "At least it doesn't have venom."

Since Lina was having a good day as attested by her 2-over-par card going to 8, we had to transfer her to the flight ahead of us and make her the second partner of Manuel Roa, who was already paired with Anya Tanpinco.

After saying the usual goodbyes, Alice, Jake and I drifted apart.

"Good luck on your game tomorrow," Jake told Alice.

"Thank you," said Alice. "Heat or no heat, I intend to finish tomorrow—and the tournament."

After planting a kiss on Alice's cheek, I went back to bed. In my sleep, I dreamed of an eagle.

GLENN Aguilar of Caltex Revtex displays his Golden Wheel award.

2nd Annual
Golden Wheel Award

Revtex Rocket honored by Golden Wheel

REVTEX Rocket Glenn Aguilar added another feather in his cap after he was honored Motocross Rider of the Year in the Golden Wheel Awards at the Manila Polo Club recently.

Aguilar, nicknamed the Revtex Rocket due to his speed and awesome riding skills, was the unanimous choice by the Golden Wheel Foundation as the best athlete in motocross due to his numerous accomplishments in and out of the country.

His most important achievement last season was being chosen as Asia's lone representative to the FIM World Motocross Championships in Namur, Belgium, where he was able to compete with the world's greatest riders, including his idol Stefan Everts.

This, plus an unbeaten streak in local soil in the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association-sanctioned Philippine National Motocross Championships and the revived Camel Supercross, has catapulted him to an unprecedented eighth Rider of the Year title from Namssa, not to mention the Breakthrough Performance of the Year for Racing Award by Sports TV on Channel 23.

"This is an award that is very special, considering that it came from our peers in the motorsports industry," said Aguilar, who credited Revtex oil for his banner year. "Revtex oil has been a constant over the team's supremacy in local and international motocross. It's one of the primary reasons why the Revtex team is a cut above the rest."

Aguilar began his quest for the Asian title with a bang as he became the best Asian finisher in the 2005 FIM Asian Motocross Championships at the Calvo Raceway in Guam recently. He beat all of his Asian rivals in the season opener, including Japanese Tadazaku Ohtsuka in the premier 125cc category of the FIM event featuring the best riders from the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia.

Aguilar and another Revtex standout—Kenneth San Andres—were chosen by the Namssa to represent the Philippines in the FIM Asia event.

"This (Guam) is a very good start but I hope to do better when the series goes to our own turf in Palawan on March 20," said Aguilar, who is also backed by Sidi Boots, Renthal, Oakley, Flamboyant Construction, HJC Helmets, Sea Palace Restaurant, GCG Pipes, Bridgestone and Pro Grip.

"It will be a very difficult battle in the coming Palawan leg, considering that the field is improving, but with Revtex oil, I know that I will pull through," he added added

Bata, top cue artists support Fajardo

THEY'RE WILLING to play for the country only if selected through a setup that has been established under the present leadership.

The top billiards players of the land, led by Efren "Bata" Reyes and Francisco "Django" Bustamante, stressed this yesterday through a manifesto of support for Ernesto Fajardo, president of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines (BSCP) and Aristeo "Putch" Puyat, godfather for billiards of the Philippine contingent to the Southeast Asian Games this November.

In a rare show of unity and force, Reyes and Co. met over lunch to sign the manifesto they later presented to Reyes and Puyat, "as the best combination that will select the best players that will give our country the biggest chances of winning gold medals."

The players said they decided to come out and openly support the leadership of Fajardo and Puyat, personally picked by First gentleman Mike Arroyo to be the billiards godfather, because they "deplore and will resist the actions of other sports personalities and politicians trying to interfere and disturb the setup that has been established in selecting the members of the Philippine Team."

Other prominent players who signed the manifesto were Marlon Manalo, Edgar Acaba, Leonardo Andam, Rodolfo Luat, Roberto Dy, Warren Kiamco, Lee Vann Corteza, Antonio Gabica, Eduardo Saracho, Luis Saberdo, Gandy Valle, Carlo Biado, Jose de Rosario, Joven Alba and Edgar Sacaba, president of the Philippine Cue Artists Association (PCA).

The players said reigning world pool champion Alex Pagulayan, who is campaigning abroad, had assured them of his support.

Also signing the manifesto were international arbiters-referees led by Jimmy Chongco, Federico Lingan, Roberto Tuazon, Filemon de Leon and Hermoso Joson.

REYES

BUSTAMANTE

The united front put up by the players came in the wake of recent reports of a power play instigated by a longtime BSCP official and supported by a ranking member of the Philippine Olympic Committee.

The move was aimed at ousting Fajardo as BSCP head and installing Sen. Francis Pangilinan as president and actor Niño Muhlach and Xander Tantoco as new board members.

For his part, Fajardo said he is calling for a special meeting on Feb. 28 to discuss the expansion of membership and scheduling of elections.

The players, who included the lower rated cue-wielding artists, said they feared disruption of the necessary selection, preparation and training of the Philipine billiards contingent if the Fajardo-Puyat combination is changed.

"Politics and the attendant power play of non-stakeholders and plain interlopers desiring to wrest control of the premier billiards association in the country will be resisted to the end by players who believe in the leadership of Ernesto Fajardo and Aristeo Puyat," noted a billiards supporter.

The tryouts for the Philippine men's and women's contingent have already started.

The series of elimination tournaments and a ranking system to be set up by Puyat and a technical committee will be the basis for the final composition of the RP billiards team.

Young Bata gains last 16

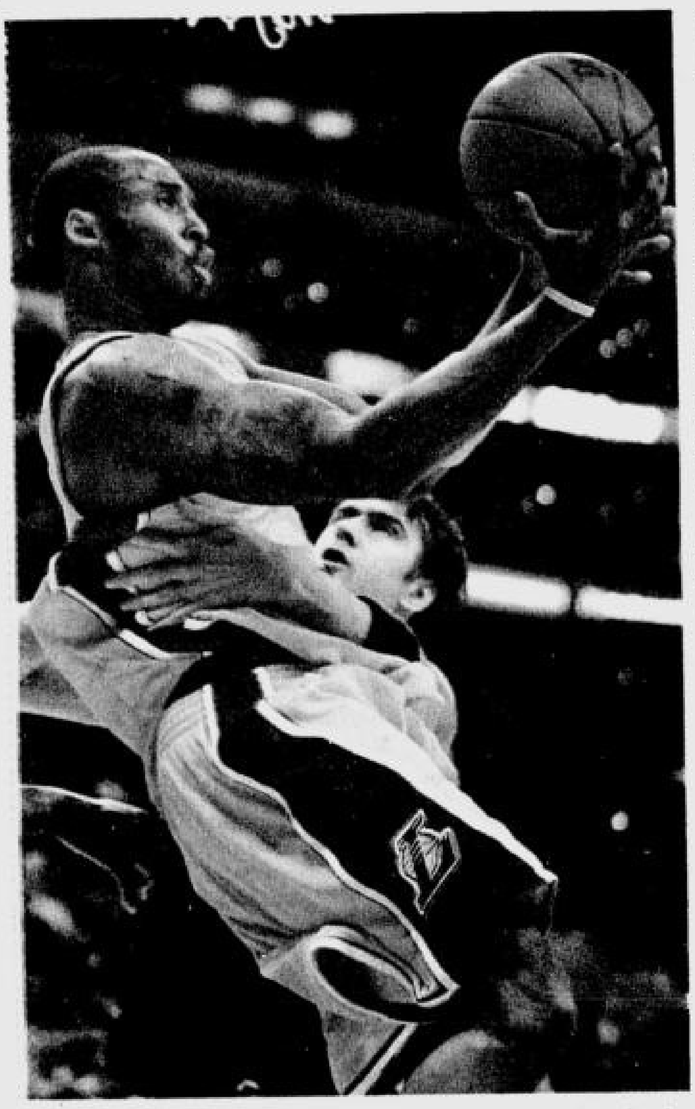
TAYABAS pride Jeffrey De Luna, known in the local billiards circuit as "Jeff Bata," joined his idol Efren "Bata" Reyes in the main draw of the Hope P1-Million All-Filipino Billiards Open starting on Feb. 21 at the IBC-13 Studio.

De Luna, 20, became the youngest qualifier in the last 16 by beating fellow Quezon native Dondon Razalan, 7-4, in one of four knockout matches on the losers' bracket in the qualifying phase Tuesday at the Bowling Inn and Billiards Center in Taft Avenue, Manila.

"I want to thank Mr. Perry Mariano for supporting me," said De Luna in Filipino.

De Luna defeated Jerome Penia of Mandaluyong City, 7-3, and Elmer Calaquian of Manila, 7-4, before bowing to Luis Saberdo of Manila, 7-6, in the winner side bracket.

Also advancing via the backdoor were 1998 Asian Games gold medalist Gandy "Sapsal" Valle of Davao City, Manila's Luis Saberdo and Joven Alba, both members of the RP snooker team.



LAKERS' Kobe Bryant goes up to the hoop under pressure from Jazz's Mehmet Okur during the first half. AP

Nuggets finally nail Atlanta victory

ATLANTA—Carmelo Anthony's jump shot with nine-tenths of a second to play gave the Denver Nuggets their first victory in Atlanta since 1988, 100-96, over the Hawks on Tuesday night.

Anthony led the Nuggets with 22 points as Denver ended a 14-game losing streak in Atlanta.

"It's an important win," said Denver coach George Karl. "If we do have a chance to make the playoffs, we'll remember this one."

Following a miss by Denver's Andre Miller, the Hawks got the ball and Atlanta coach Mike Woodson did not call a timeout. Antoine Walker fired an air ball on a fallaway jumper, Denver rebounded and called timeout with 6.8 seconds left. Then Anthony launched the winning shot from the left wing.

"They put (Antoine) Walker on Kenyon and Kenyon made the right read," Karl said.

Walker led the Hawks with 22 points and 12 rebounds. Tony Delk followed with 19 points.

Marcus Camby had 17 for Denver, and Kenyon Martin and former Hawk DerMarr Johnson each added 16.

The Nuggets had not won in Atlanta since Dec. 10, 1988.

In Minneapolis, Kevin McHale earned his first coaching victory and Michael Olowokandi had 17 points and 12 rebounds as Minnesota downed New Jersey.

Kevin Garnett, who shot 0-for-5 from the floor in the first half, scored 17 points. Wally Szczerbiak added 14 for Minnesota, which won for just the second time in the last 10 games and set season bests in points allowed (71) and opponents' field goal percentage (31.0).

Vince Carter had 25 of his 32 points in the first half for New Jersey, which got a season-high 18 points from Ron Mercer.

As Minnesota's vice president of basketball operations, McHale fired Flip Saunders on Saturday, the first action taken by management in response to this highly disappointing season.

In Orlando, Florida, Grant Hill scored a season-high 39 points for Orlando, but it was two clutch jump shots by Steve Francis in the final minute that closed out the slumping Los Angeles Clippers.

Francis finished with 16 points and seven assists for Orlando, which won for the third time in four games. *AP*

Complete results:

Orlando 99, LA Clippers 94; Denver 100, Atlanta 96; Minnesota 82, New Jersey 71; Chicago 107, Sacramento 102; Houston 123, Washington 93; LA Lakers 102, Utah 95; Dallas 114, Golden State 107. *Reuters*

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All-Star football ups tsunami aid

BARCELONA, Spain—A collection of soccer talent not seen in at least 30 years braved near freezing temperatures and a polar wind Tuesday, displaying their skills for an exhibition all-star match in hopes of raising $3 million (2.3 million euro) for victims of December's South Asian tsunamis.

Samuel Eto'o and Henry Camara scored twice each and Barcelona's own Ronaldinho also had a goal to lead his team of mostly non-European stars over Andriy Shevchenko's largely continental crew, 6-3.

In a match dubbed "The Game of Hope," players like Eto'o and Deco dazzled a crowd of 35,000 at Camp Nou stadium and a television audience in 150 countries with heel flicks, dummy dribbles and goals.

"It's the first time in my 30 years with FIFA that there's been such an assembly of players of this stature," FIFA president Sepp Blatter said. "This is football, and it's football for the future."

FIFA hopes to raise about $10 million (7.7 million euro) for the victims of the Dec. 26 waves caused by an earthquake off the coast of Indonesia that killed at least 157,000. It hoped to raise one-third from Tuesday's match.

The proceeds were to go to the Tsunami Solidarity Fund set up by FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation.

"It's a joy to participate in this with so many great players and for such a great cause," Ronaldinho said.

African player of the year for the second year running, Barcelona forward Eto'o put the non-Europeans ahead in the 13th minute with low shot from the edge of the area that sailed past Real Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas.

Ronaldinho doubled the lead five minutes later, finishing off a playful maneuver by Deco and Japan's Hidetoshi Nakata of Fioretina.

Zinedine Zidane lobbed a stunning pass to spring Italy's Alessandro del Piero, who blasted a shot past AC Milan's Brazilian goalkeeper Dida in the 26th to keep the Europeans close.

But Eto'o shined brightest, stealing the ball moments from Kakhaber Kaladze before halftime ball, dribbling round a diving Casillas and depositing into an open net.

Gianfranco Zola and Honduras' David Suazo drew Shevchenko's team even by the 53rd minute, but Senegal's Henri Camara, of Southampton, scored twice in three minutes to restore the non-Europeans to the lead.

The African thundered in a shot the 60th minute, seconds before Ronaldinho left the game to wild applause, then scored again in the 63rd.

South Korea's Cha Doo-ri powered home a sixth in the 79th minute.

Ronaldinho said to television viewers, "The result tonight is not important, it's the spectacle in aid of a very great cause." *AP*

Mandaue hosts Abapo-Marzan title showdown

Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

BART Abapo and Mindanao's Rex Marzan will fight for the vacant Philippine junior welterweight crown in a 12-round showdown on March 5 at the Mandaue City Sports and Cultural Complex.

The Games and Amusements Board had earlier declared the 140-lb title vacant after Dindo Castañares won the WBF light welterweight title with a fourth-round demolition of New Zealand-based Venezuelan Guillermo Mosquera last Dec. 11 in Auckland.

The March 5 encounter will be a grudge rematch. ALA Boy Abapo prevailed by points in his first encounter with Marzan in 2002.

Abapo, who will be moving up in weight to face Marzan this time, is coming off a controversial majority decision loss at the hands of Sydney-based Ethiopian Yohannes Shefferaw last Nov. 12 in Victoria, Australia.

Prior to that, he knocked down US-trained Arnick Arabala twice en route to a second-round victory in Mandaue City.

The Abapo-Marzan showdown, which was originally scheduled for Feb. 26 in Tagbilaran City, will be the first SGG Promotions event in Mandaue City since the record-shattering WBO Asia-Pacific bantam showdown between Rey Bautista and South African Vuyisile Bebe last Jan. 29.

Swimsuit issue out

NEW YORK—Sports Illustrated's annual swimsuit issue hit the American newsstands Tuesday with Olympians such as Australian basketball hero Lauren Jackson being pictured along with American tennis star Venus Williams. Jennie Finch, a US softball pitcher, was pictured showing off her Athens gold medal clad in a gold bikini while US swimmer Amanda Beard, who has won seven Olympic medals, was in a large fold out. *AFP*

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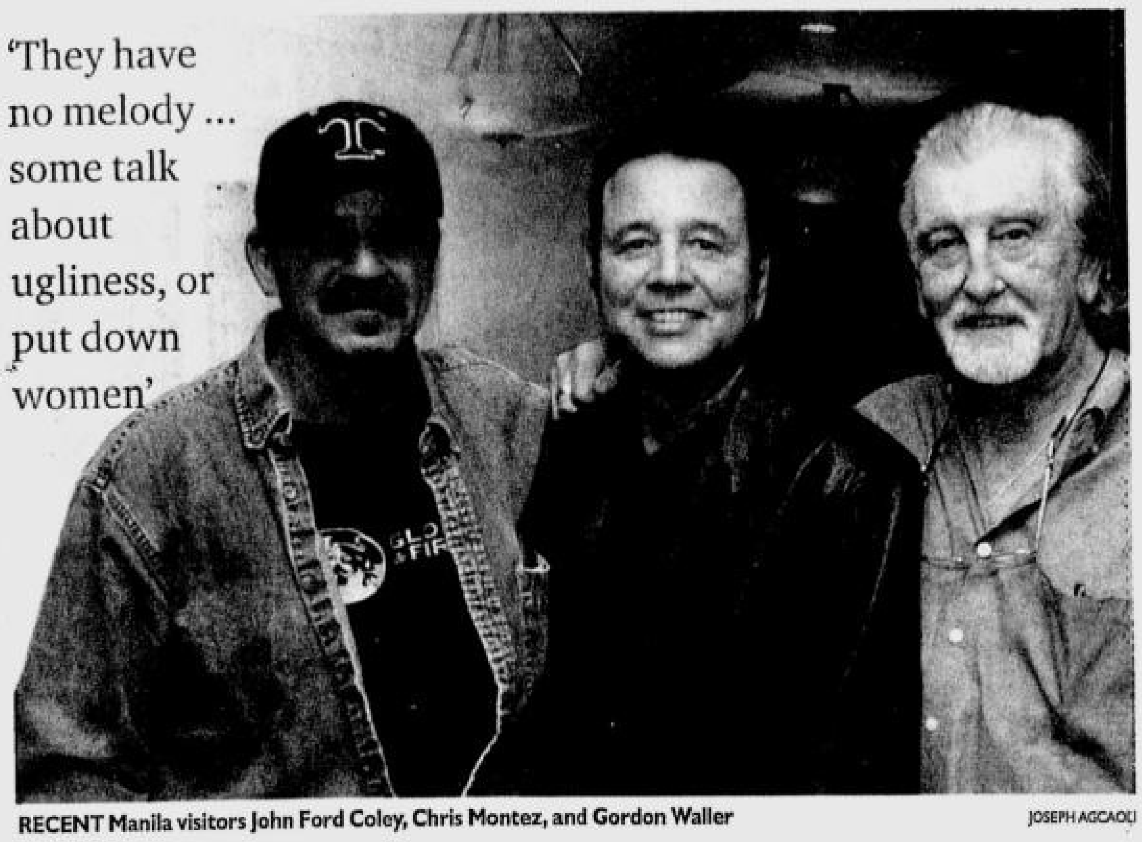
'They have no melody ... some talk about ugliness, or put down women'



RECENT Manila visitors John Ford Coley, Chris Montez, and Gordon Waller

JOSEPH AGCAOILI

Waller, Montez and Coley: Why today's songs are 'sad'

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THEY may have a lot more wrinkles on their faces, and added a few pounds around the middle, but their sound got better, like vintage wine.

Gordon Waller of the British duo Peter and Gordon, Chris Montez and American John Ford Coley shared that sound with Manila audiences in a series of Valentine shows presented by Steve O'Neal Production.

Waller, Coley and Montez performed at the Aliw Theater on Feb. 12; then Gordon and Coley at Hard Rock Café on Feb. 13; and finally Gordon and Montez for the Valentine's Day show also at Hard Rock Café.

It was a homecoming of sorts for Gordon Waller—best-known for the Lennon-McCartney composition "World Without Love"—who first came to the Philippines in 1966.

"Manila has changed so much," Waller told INQUIRER Entertainment. "Before it was Manila, the cute little place. Now it's Jesus, this is big! I really love it."

Waller said he remembered the Philippines as one of the best places his group toured in the 1960s because of the warm reception they got and all the good food, quite a change from bland English cuisine.

Other Peter and Gordon hits that Waller performed this time aroud included "Woman," "True Love Ways" and "I Go to Pieces."

Montez's Philippine visit was a first, but he said he felt like he never left home, because of the many similarities between Filipinos and Mexicans like himself.

Felt like home

"When I arrived, I felt right at home," Montez said.

Montez, a discovery of Ritchie Valens and a protégé of Herb Alpert, is one of very few international artists who can boast of having had The Beatles as front act. His turn with the Fab Four was a performance in the United Kingdom in the 1960s.

The youthful-looking Montez made it big singing Latin-flavored hits, such as "Call Me," "Time After Time," "The More I See You," "The Girl From Ipanema," and "There Will Never Be Another You" (in the Philippines, the latter was translated into the Tito Mina hit, "Ikaw Pa Rin"). Naturally, these songs made up his repertoire last weekend.

Like Waller, John Ford Coley of the 1970s duo England Dan and John Ford Coley was no stranger to the Philippines.

He had been here a number of times—enough, he said, to know that Filipinos were such romantics, and explain the staying power of his songs on Philippine radio. Indeed, "Sad to Belong," "Nights Are Forever," "Just Tell Me You Love Me," and "I'd Really Love to See you Tonight" are staples for local stations specializing in love songs.

Coley was more than happy to perform those same songs in the Manila gigs. "I love singing them because they never change," he said. The melodies could be the deciding factor in the songs' lasting success, he figured. "Melody is important; it makes things memorable and brings some kind of connection with the past."

Which was the reason, Montez agreed, that most of today's new songs are not worth listening to.

He explained: "They have no melody. They are not beautiful. Some put down women and talk about such ugliness. I always say that if the world was made up only of real musicians, there will be peace in the world because we think alike. We want to talk about how beautiful life is."

Waller could find only one word to describe modern songs: "Sad."

He elaborated: "Music [today] is so bloody sad. It's nothing. You see people picking up those guitars and instruments, and using them not for what they were intended to do."

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Scenes from a birthday party

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Dolly Ann Carvajal

MY LOVABLE UP comrade and dzMM talent Ambet Nabus celebrated his birthday with a bang at Toilet Humor comedy bar in Malate owned by Lala Aunor (of the '70s "Apat na Sikat" fame).

It was an exclusive party attended by Ambet's friends from the sports, entertainment, politics and media sectors. PBA hotshots Alvin Patrimonio, Jerry Codiñera, Marlou Aquino, Kenneth Duremdes, Gerard Francisco Noli Locsin, Patrick Fran and Bong Ravena, Rodney Santos, Olsen Racela and Coach Jong Uichico were present. Media colleagues led by Cristy Fermin also came in full force to party with ever popular Ambet (fondly called "Ambeatable" by close friends).

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FACES OF COOL
Celebs at the world premiere of the film "Be Cool" (sequel to "Get Shorty") on Feb., 14 at Grauman's Theater in Hollywood. From top left, Kirstie Alley; Uma Thurman who stars in the film with John Travolta; Anna Nicole Smith; Steven Tyler; and Travolta, with wife Kelly Preston.

REUTERS

Host-in-waiting ridicules Oscars

LOS ANGELES—Producers of the upcoming Academy Awards are getting what they paid for when they hired sharp-tongued comic Chris Rock to host the Oscars—controversy that could boost TV ratings.

Recently published remarks by Rock poking fun at the awards sparked talk in Hollywood that the Oscar host-in-waiting was living up to the title of his celebrated 1996 HBO special, "Bring the Pain."

Internet gossip columnist Matt Drudge posted an item on his website over the weekend quoting unnamed members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences expressing outrage at some Oscar-bashing comments by Rock in an Entertainment Weekly interview.

'Idiotic'

Rock said he had rarely watched the Oscars, and called award shows "idiotic."

"Come on, it's a fashion show," Rock told the magazine. "They don't recognize comedy, and you don't see a lot of black people nominated, so why should I watch it?"

Drudge cited unnamed sources as saying angry academy members were privately calling for Rock to be removed as host.

ABC, a unit of the Walt Disney Co., will broadcast the 77th Academy Awards on Feb. 27. *Reuters*

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2 SIDEWAYS	2 CONSTANTINE	2 SIDEWAYS 6 CONSTANTINE	GUARANTEED SEATS 2 CONSTANTINE	2 WITHOUT A PADDLE
3 LET THE LOVE BEGIN	3 5 CHILDREN & IT	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 CONSTANTINE 7 RAY	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA	3 ALEX & EMMA
4 DREAMBOY	4 DREAMBOY	4 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX	GUARANTEED SEATS 4 RAY	4 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
5 THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA		GB1 GREENBELT 1 1 SIDEWAYS 2 CONSTANTINE	GUARANTEED SEATS 5 SIDEWAYS	5

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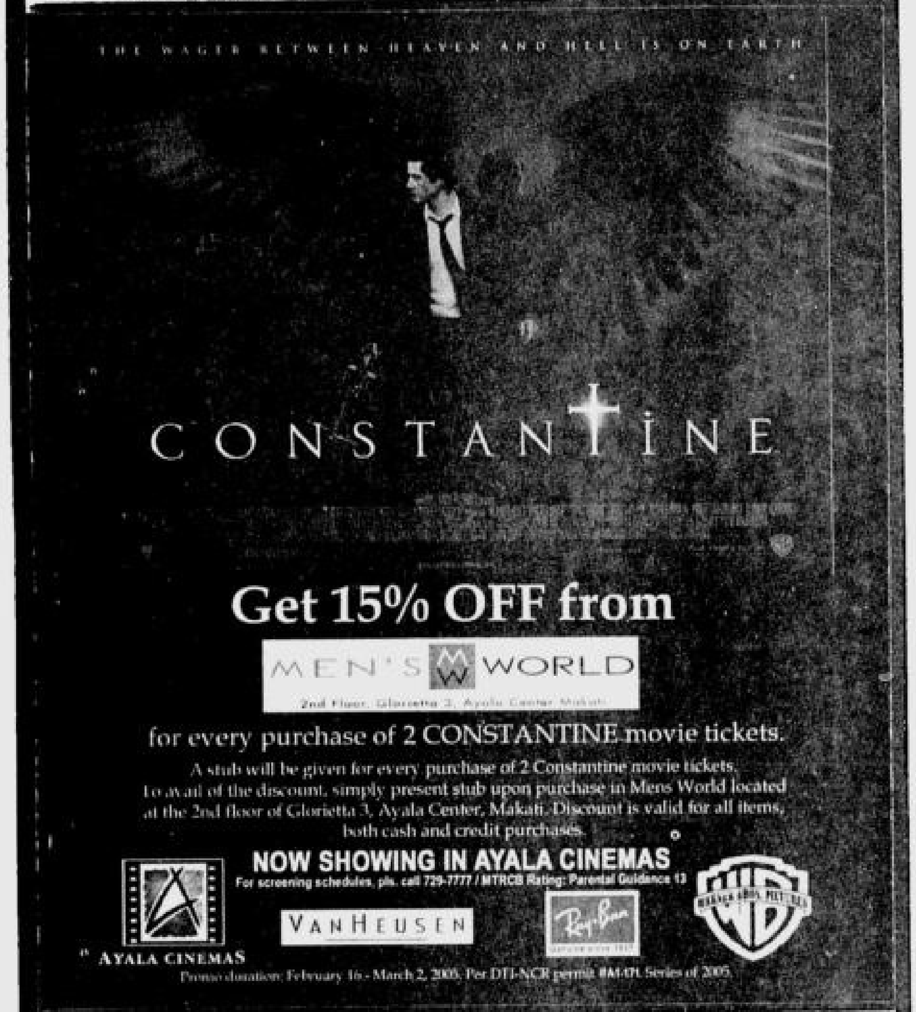

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9 MEET THE FOCKERS
10 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

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4 DREAMBOY
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6 DREAMBOY
7 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
8 LET THE LOVE BEGIN

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3 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
4 ELEKTRA
5 DREAMBOY
6 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
7 ALFIE
8 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13

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3 5 CHILDREN AND IT
4 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

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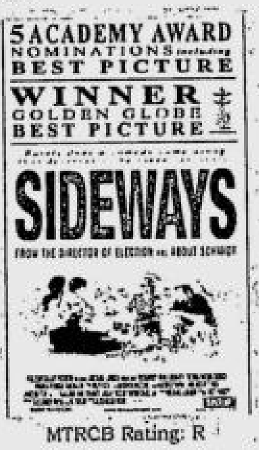

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Scenes from . . .

From page A29

Chiz Escudero arrived with Kaye Dacer. Kris Aquino took time out from her hectic sked to drop by Ambet's bash. So did his professor-friends from UP like Malou de Guzman, Armi Vallejo-Santiago and TV director Gigi Javier alfonso. They are the ones handling the workshop seminar that "Toilet Humor" will soon mount to upgrade the brand of comedy of said establishment, along with GMA 7's direk Cesar Cosme and Brod Pit.

Wacky

"Toilet Humor's" stand-up comedians made the night even wackier by lampooning the celebrity guests, all in the spirit of good clean fun. For instance, when Locsin, Francisco, Ravena and Patrimonio went onstage to sing, they were ribbed no end and tagged as the new "Apat Na Sikat."

Kris was the center of attention especially among the cagers who are currently linked to her. Heard that one player (who has been ardently pursuing Kris) walked out because Tetay didn't even notice him. Ex-lovers Alvin and Kris were cordial with each other. She asked him when he was to leave for Spain with his wife Cindy and their kids, who have all won tennis scholarships there. Cindy will stay with the kids there, Alvin will come back to fulfill his duties as Purefoods team manager.

Many guests were shocked to see a sexy actress (from GMA 7) make a grand entrance with a controversial Fil-Am player. A "Starstruck" talent and ABS-CBN young star were also quite a sight because of their excessive display of affection.

Sub-plots

Other interesting "sub-plots" during the party were PBA Commissioner Noli Eala's non-appearance, reportedly to avoid any possible friction with Asi Taulava. The estranged wife of Kenneth Duremdes backed out at the last minute, possibly so as not to cross paths with her husband, against whom she has filed charges of physical injury and abandonment (like the ongoing case of Marissa Fernandez against her husband, PBA legend Ramon Fernandez). Do some PBA cagers get so carried away with the game that they commit "fouls" even on the domestic front? Shouldn't the PBA look into this? It's sad when role models like PBA players bounce out of bounds.

All in all, Ambet's party was a star-studded affair. He ain't called "Ambeatable" for nothing. Happy, happy birthday, *kapatid!* I know that Ma is smiling from up above, seeing how you've grown!

(For feedback e-mail wateringhole-shangrila@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaith-band.com)

ELIZABETH TAYLOR, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross and Barry Gibb may be called to testify

All-star cast of character witnesses seen for Jacko

SANTA MARIA, California—An all-star cast of witnesses, including Elizabeth Taylor, Stevie Wonder and Diana Ross, could be called to testify in Michael Jackson's child sex trial, lawyers revealed Monday.

Music mogul Quincy Jones, basketball star Kobe Bryant, illusionist Uri Geller and Bee Gee Barry Gibb are also among the Hollywood A-list celebrities who might be called to the witness stand.

While the glare of publicity has surged now that the rival lawyers revealed their lists of more than 500 potential witnesses, Judge Rodney Melville vowed the pop superstar would get a fair trial.

"I can assure all of you there will be a fair trial here, based on me being the judge," Melville told Jackson and more than 100 potential jurors in the Santa Monica, California courtroom.

"I am neither bought or paid for, nor have I made up my mind; and I would like a jury that feels the same way," the no-nonsense judge told the panelists as jury selection got underway in earnest.

Melville ordered Jackson to rise and face the potential panelists. The singer complied.

Melville read a summary of the 10 charges against the 46-year-old father of three.

The judge and the rival lawyers then grilled 18 of the potential panelists.

Several of them said they had not been influenced by the publicity given the case. One woman caused the superstar to chuckle when she said her best friend used to drive her crazy by playing the same Michael Jackson song over and over.

Because a single dissenting voice could prevent a conviction, the composition of the jury could be a major factor in determining whether the "King of Pop" will spend up to 20 years behind bars.

AFP

Learning from television

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

THE TELEVISION medium has been accused of "idioticizing" its viewers, but some TV shows do give us a lot of helpful information, so we make it a point to watch them.

On the "Today Show" on the Etc. Channel, a recent feature focused on **Jack Canfield**'s new book "The Success Principles." Canfield has many readers because he is the author of the popular "Chicken Soup for the Soul" book series.

Well, his latest tome should also hit it big because, according to Canfield, it covers all of the factors that people need to consider if they want to have a happy, prosperous and fulfilling life.

We need some of those psychological adjustments to take responsibility for our own actions, and stop blaming other people for what happens to us.

We have to know why we're here, and have a clear idea of the best work we can do. How do we determine this? Canfield's advice: When you're doing something that makes you feel especially happy and fulfilled, *that's* the field of work for you!

Next, we have to decide what we want, so we stand a better chance of getting it. Canfield shares the story of a man who listed down 100 goals for himself, and has now achieved almost all of them!

Finally, don't believe that the world is against you. As Canfield puts it, be an "inverse paranoid," and things will go your way.

The book details many other success principles, but we'll have to get a copy of it to find out.

For its part, "Diplomatic License" on CNN recently did an interesting feature on predictions. It listed US psychics' "educated guesses" on how 2004 would turn out, and graded their astuteness as prognosticators.

The predictions for 2004: The assassination of a leader in the Middle East. The capture of Bin Laden. More democracy in Iran that would result in a "domino effect" in the region—well, they didn't really pan out, did they? Hope US psychics have better luck in 2005!

Finally, on the "Today Show" a few days ago, experts discussed a recent survey of couples on what factors make marriage work.

They agreed with the overriding principle that people first get attracted to each other because they share pretty much the same values. When physical attraction starts to develop, appealing personality traits make a big, positive impression of their own, and love kicks in.

Thus, the experts say that marriage, for it to last, should be between partners who share similar values, and are attractive to each other in terms of personality and character. In this regard, the study effectively contradicts the old saying, "opposites attract." What do you think?

'Flight of the Phoenix'

THE HIGH-FLYING action adventure "Flight of the Phoenix" stars **Dennis Quaid** as cargo plane pilot Frank Towns. He's sent to the Tan Sag Basin in Mongolia to evacuate the staff of an oil exploration company that has been shut down. He has no idea that this "routine" operation will result in a life-and-death struggle—and a triumphant rebirth.

After the plane is damaged beyond repair, the surviving passengers and crew face imminent death—until an eccentric, mysterious man named Elliott suggests that they build a new plane from the parts of the cargo plane. What an awesome challenge!

"Flight of the Phoenix" also stars **Giovanni Ribisi** and **Tyrese Gibson.**

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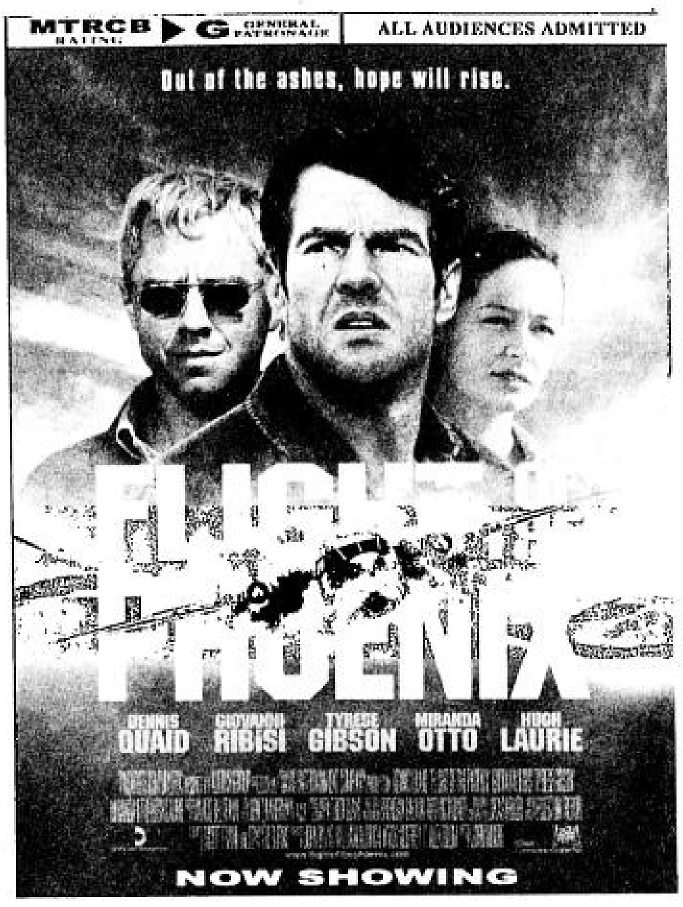
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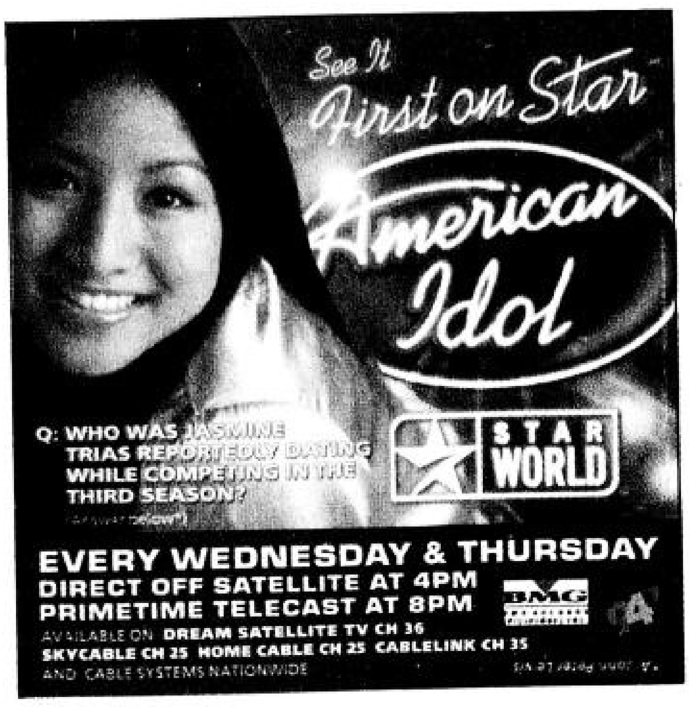
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Insiders fear that show biz is growing dirtier by the minute because of 'chismis' shows on TV

DELOS REYES

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PORTES

Presence of malice

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Contributor

(First of two parts)

INDUSTRY insiders fear that the situation is approaching perilous proportions.

Nowadays, they say, all celebrities—famous or not, talented or talent-strapped—are fair game for gossip shows on television. No one is spared in the pursuit of the next big scandal. Even the public is now being asked to participate in the spectacle.

On ABS-CBN's "ETK," televiewers are invited to text in their "answers" to blind items broadcast weekly. If they guess correctly, they can win cash prizes of up to P5,000.

On GMA-7's "S-Files," audiences are asked to "contribute" any rumor or scandal they may know of or have heard.

"What's this, a witch hunt?" award-winning movie and TV scriptwriter and director Jose Javier Reyes wonders.

No, it is not a witch hunt; just the present preoccupation in show town.

"This is dangerous," talent manager Ed Instrella says. "Soon we'll have people spying on their neighbors and relatives."

Another prize-winning filmmaker, Maryo J. De los Reyes, adds: "We shouldn't be making a living out of the misery of others."

"Sickening," is how yet another multi-awarded director Gil Portes sees the local TV landscape. "Rating (to rate) is the name of the game."

Respected filmmakers are not the only ones alarmed by the situation.

Actors, too

Being in the line of fire, actors are quite naturally appalled by the incessant muck-raking and mud-slinging.

"Everything is in-your-face," notes actress Dawn Zulueta, coming back to the industry after a seven-year absence. "I get embarrassed by all the family feuds and scandals."

The sad part, Zulueta observes, is that those who participate in the propagation of such scandals not only hog the limelight, but also land plum projects.

The actress sighs: "I sometimes ask myself: Do I have to play ball and resort to controversies just to land jobs?"

Another perennial winner of acting awards, Jaclyn Jose, is proud that she has successfully avoided guesting "in such shows." Several times, she said, she was asked to talk about some rumor involving herself and her loved ones.

"When they call, I simply decline," Jose says. "It's a waste of time."

While many younger stars are tripping all over themselves for 15 minutes of fame, Jose eschews all that, saying: "*Hindi namin pinapatulan 'yang mga gimik na 'yan* (We don't bother with such gimmicks)."

Instrella, who is Jose's manager, clarifies: "In fairness, TV reporters respect our decision whenever we choose to remain quiet on specific issues."

But that's probably because Instrella's stars are not the type to resort to gimmickry and controversies.

How about those who are desperate for attention and adulation—always a deadly combination?

Cult of celebrity

"These days, you just don't know where the rumors are coming from," Reyes says. "[The practice] could very well have been invented by non-actors who want to be noticed. Or by producers who want to promote a product—whether a celebrity or a movie. It has become part of the show biz machinery."

The problem, Reyes points out, is that all these TV *chismis* shows are predicated on "the cult of the celebrity."

"We should learn to differentiate between genuine artists and mere celebrities who want to gain visibility in a very crowded room," Reyes says.

Unfortunately, most televiewers—those who have come to regard such shows as requisite entertainment fare, and part of their lives—can no longer distinguish between the two.

Moreover, they are likely to turn a blind eye on the serious social implications of the barrage of scandals—at once mundane and malicious—that are aired daily.

De los Reyes stressed: "*Chismis* [rumor-mongering] in media impedes our development as a people and as a nation."

(Tomorrow: What should be done?)

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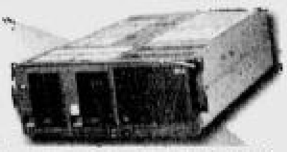

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Editor Raul O. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma
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January BOP posts deficit of $277M

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES incurred a balance-of-payment shortfall of $277 million in January, an improvement from the $595-million deficit a year ago, as debt payments outpaced investment inflow.

In a press briefing yesterday, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said there was some $600 million worth of foreign exchange outflow for the payment of maturing obligations.

"However, this was offset by (a stronger) inflow," Buenaventura said, referring to the influx of foreign portfolio investments or "hot money" and remittances from overseas Filipino workers since the start of the year.

Buenaventura said the BOP should turn positive by February as proceeds from the government's recent $1.5-billion bond float come in.

"What is crucial is the yearend (BOP)," he said.

The BSP expects the BOP to revert to a surplus this year, although it has scaled down its surplus target to $464 million from the original projection of $570 million due to some deferred investments in the manufacturing sector.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trade in goods and services as well as transfers. Any transaction which gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident like importation is a deficit item while any transaction which gives rise to a receipt like exporting or inward remittance is a surplus item.

Buenaventura said remittances from OFWs should significantly help boost the BOP this year, especially with the country's delisting from the watchlist of "uncooperative" countries by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force against money laundering.

"The removal by FATF will make the OFW remittance process less cumbersome, so the cost will also go down," Buenaventura said.

He also said OFW inflow was rising due to the increase in the deployment of overseas workers, better quality of overseas workers and the improved efficiency of the remittance system.

The country incurred a BOP shortfall of $282 million in 2004, a reversal of the $111-million surplus chalked up last year, due to outflow for debt repayments as well as slower trade and investment inflow.

The deterioration in the capital and financial account dragged down the country's overall BOP last year. However, the BSP expects foreign direct investment in 2005 to be significantly higher than the inflow last year.

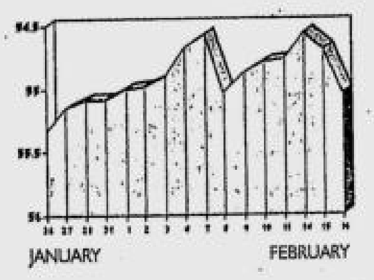
The turnaround to a BOP deficit in 2004 was also reflected by the slowdown in the country's gross international reserves, which in turn was partly due to declining current account surpluses.

The country's GIR hit $16.05 billion at end-December, up by 1.1 percent from end-November but 4.8 percent lower than the end-2003 level of $16.86 billion.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



P 55.05 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 16, 2005

¥ 104.99 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 16, 2005

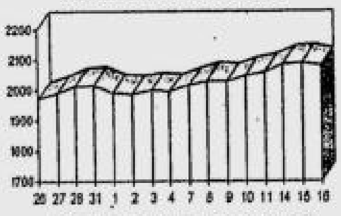
GOLD: $ 425.00-425.50
per ounce Hong Kong, Feb. 16, 2005

February 16, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.767813	1.000000	54.6840
Japan	Yen	0.007354	0.009578	0.5238
United Kingdom	Pound	1.456695	1.897200	103.7465
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098451	0.128222	7.0117
Switzerland	Franc	0.645113	0.840195	45.9452
Canada	Dollar	0.624036	0.812744	44.4441
Singapore	Dollar	0.468894	0.610687	33.3948
Australia	Dollar	0.603200	0.785608	42.9602
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.036694	2.652590	145.0542
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204745	0.266660	14.5820
Brunei	Dollar	0.467466	0.608828	33.2932
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000083	0.000108	0.0059
Thailand	Baht	0.020022	0.026077	1.4260
UAE	Dirham	0.209054	0.272272	14.8889
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.302400	71.2204
Argentina	Peso	0.264535	0.344531	18.8403
Brazil	Real	0.299249	0.389742	21.3127
Denmark	Kroner	0.134332	0.174954	9.5672
India	Rupee	0.017566	0.022878	1.2511
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.202083	0.263193	14.3924
Mexico	New Peso	0.068773	0.089570	4.8980
New Zealand	Dollar	0.549459	0.715615	39.1327
Norway	Kroner	0.119251	0.155313	8.4931
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012935	0.016846	0.9212
South Africa	Rand	0.128399	0.167227	9.1446
Korea	Won	0.000748	0.000974	0.0533
Sweden	Kroner	0.110210	0.143538	7.8492
Syria	Pound	0.014791	0.019264	1.0534
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024418	0.031802	1.7391
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000401	0.000522	0.0285

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 0.56% lower after Moody's downgrade

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

SHARE prices closed 0.56 percent lower yesterday after Moody's Investors Service downgraded by two notches the country's long-term foreign and local currency ratings due to concerns over high public debt levels, dealers said.

They said aggressive buying of stocks with robust earnings prospects dominated yesterday's early trade, but Moody's announcement immediately prompted investors to cash-in their gains.

The composite index closed down 11.62 points at 2,078.48. It traded between 2,073.94 and 2,129.51.

Volume reached 10.96 billion shares worth P2.72 billion from Tuesday's 6.36 billion shares worth P2.08 billion.

The broader all-shares index was up 13.80 points at 1,221.60.

Losers led gainers 71 to 44, with 41 stocks unchanged.

Rating agency Moody's Investors Service downgraded the Philippines' long-term foreign and local currency ceilings and ratings, citing concerns over the large build-up in the government's external debt. (See story on page 1.)

"The stock market may have managed to stand up after the first blow, but the second one was too much," AB Capital Securities research director Jose Vistan said. Standard and Poor's earlier downgraded the country's sovereign rating by a notch. *AFP*

AEV eyes more power facilities

ABOITIZ Equity Ventures (AEV)., the listed holding firm of the Aboitiz family, is keen on bidding anew for some of the government's hydroelectric power plants, a company official told the INQUIRER.

AEV chief operating officer Erramon Aboitiz said AEV was raising funds from the sale of treasury shares to participate in the privatization of power generation assets of the cash-strapped National Power Corp. (Napocor).

The company is particulary interested in Napocor's hydroelectric plants in Ambuklao and Binga, both in Benguet, and in Masiway and Pantabangan in Nueva Ecija.

In a separate disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) yesterday, AEV said its board approved the plan to sell 890 million shares of AEV held in treasury and those by AEV subsidiaries within the year. No fixed schedule was given. As of the close of trading, AEV shares were valued at P4.45 each.

The company also declared a cash dividend of 12 centavos a share to stockholders on record as of March 2 and payable on March 21. AEV will use internally generated funds for the payout.

AEV earlier raised P1.87 billion by offering preferred shares to investors to refinance P1 billion in debt and fund other projects.

The Aboitiz family has interests in transportation, power generation and distribution, banking and food. *Elizabeth Sanchez*

INTEREST RATES

February 16, 2005-MART1

Rates Benchmark Interest Rates	MART 1 16-Feb-05	MART 1 15-Feb-05
1 Month	6.9067	6.93
3 Months	6.9625	7.0404
6 Months	7.8583	7.9067
1 Year	8.8393	8.8521
2 Years	9.72	9.5733
3 Years	10.635	10.415
4 Years	11.2067	10.9917
5 Years	11.5768	11.3654
7 Years	12.1383	11.9933
10 Years	12.6883	12.66
20 Years	13.2383	13.215
25 Years	14.144	14.1373

ALI subsidiaries to redevelop Manila race track

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TWO subsidiaries of property giant Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) have inked an agreement with race track operator Manila Jockey Club Inc. (MJCI) for the development of a 6.47-hectare property in Manila.

Community Innovations Inc. (CII) and Laguna Properties Holdings Inc. (LPHI), both wholly owned subsidiaries of ALI, signed joint development agreements with MJCI to develop a portion of MJCI's old racetrack in Sta.Cruz, Manila, into a mixed-use project.

Under the agreement, some details of which were disclosed to the Philippine Stock Exchange, MJCI will contribute the land while CII and LPHI will contribute the financial and technical resources required for the development.

MJCI will also receive P150 million as an advance from the proceeds from the sale of the units to be developed on the property.

The joint development represents the first real estate venture of LPHI and CII in Manila.

MJCI is one of the first racing clubs in Asia incorporated in March 1937. It is engaged in the construction, operation and maintenance of racetracks, and holds horse races at the San Lazaro Hippodrome in Manila. MJC also manages on- and off-track betting stations within Metro Manila.

TAIPAN AT THE INQUIRER
Taipan Lucio Tan (left) exchanges pleasantries with INQUIRER Chair Marixi R. Prieto during the tycoon's visit to the Philippine Daily Inquirer as guest in a roundtable discussion with the INQUIRER Business staff. Looking on are Harry C. Tan (right) and Jose Ngaw, special assistant to the chair of the Lucio Tan Group. Accompanying the taipan to the roundtable were son Michael and Lt. Gen. Salvador Mison (ret.), president of Basic Holdings Corp.

RP firms to gain from clean air deal

By Ronnel W. Domingo

AT LEAST 14 local companies are expected to earn millions of dollars as industries that emit high-levels of greenhouse gases scramble to secure GHG-reduction credits following the enforcement of the Kyoto Protocol starting yesterday.

Created in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, the agreement legally binds at least 30 industrialized countries to meet targets for the reduction of GHG emissions and for lowering the risk of global climate change.

The pact, which has so far 84 signatory countries, provides for a Clean Development

RP FIRMS/ B3

Finance supports tax on more luxury items

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance is in favor of expanding the list of luxurious items covered by the excise tax.

The DOF said it was supporting a proposal in the Lower House to subject to excise tax items such as antiques and other rare goods that are either made of expensive metals or handmade by artisans. The finance department also agrees with imposing an excise tax on luxurious services, such as cosmetic surgery and other body enhancements, and any medical services for aesthetic purposes.

The DOF said it believed that the old list of items considered as non-essentials and covered by the excise tax, as stated in the 1997 National Internal Revenue Code, should be updated to better observe the principle of progressive taxation. Expanding the list would help government increase its tax collection from well-to-do sectors, it said.

"We should update the list because it has already been eroded by time. Consumer behavior has changed a lot and there are more luxurious items that should be covered by the excise tax," said a ranking finance official.

Currently, the list of non-essential products covered by a 20-percent excise tax included perfumes, yachts and other vessels intended for pleasure and sports, jewelry, pearls and precious stones, and opera glasses. The tax code currently does not include luxurious services in the coverage of the excise tax.

The DOF said the additional revenue from the proposal to expand the list of luxurious items and services covered by the excise tax would only be a "few hundreds of million pesos," but added that even small amounts of incremental revenue would be helpful in easing the government's fiscal woes. The DOF has yet to come up with specific figure on the proposal's revenue impact.

Palawan Rep. Abraham Mitra, author of House Bill No. 2831 that seeks to expand the list of "excisable" products and services, is also proposing that the DOF be given the power

FINANCE/ B2

Globe's G-Cash wins global award

GSM
AWARDS
GLOBE
G-CASH

GLOBE Telecom president and chief executive Gerry C. Ablaza (center) poses with (from left) Rodell Garcia, chief information officer; Andrew Buay, chief operating adviser; Maricel Pangilinan-Arenas co-managing partner, Harrison Communications Inc.; Chinky Alcedo, head of Globe's product marketing group; Shydee Buizon-Tiambeng, head of m-commerce data services; Jose Roberto Mendoza, president of G-Xchange Inc.; Nicky Santiago, head of service creation group, and Ferdz Dela Cruz, head of consumer business group, at the awards ceremonies in Cannes, France.

By Clarissa S. Batino

GLOBE Telecom Inc.'s G-Cash has bagged the "Best Mobile Messaging Service" award given by a global organization of GSM mobile operators.

G-Cash, according to the GSM Association, had transformed the short messaging system or texting into a powerful tool of mobile commerce. Since launching the product in October, Globe has started working with various agencies to popularize the use of G-Cash.

Globe said that G-Cash is the first and only "cash-less and card-less" mobile payment platform so far.

It allows Globe's more than 12 million subscribers to buy goods and services, send and receive money at the cost and speed of a text message. A 10-percent fee is charged every time a G-Cash is converted into cash.

The joint venture of Ayala Corp. and Singapore Telecom Ltd. has also tied up with the Bureau of Internal Revenue to use G-Cash as a medium for tax payments worth P10,000 and below.

Globe said it was targeting to generate initially up to 2 million in text payment transactions yearly from the BIR's small taxpayers.

Similar arrangements were made with the

GLOBE/ B3

Talk and tax

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

YOU CAN just imagine the thrill in the financial markets when they learn about the reaction of this cute administration to the Valentine's Day bombings.

As commander-in-chief, Gloriaetta reportedly ordered the police to do everything possible to prevent terrorist attacks in the future, particularly in business districts.

Obviously, that bomb which exploded in a full-packed public bus on Edsa near the corner of Ayala Avenue during rush hours, was intended to scare off investors.

Ayala is only the premier financial street in the premier business district in the country's premier city. It's not Pasig or Taguig, okay?

The terrorists wanted to shatter whatever little business confidence we still have. To miss the message of the Ayala bombing, you must have the IQ of certain senators and congressmen.

* * *

REPORTEDLY, the police had a strong reservation about heavily armed uniformed personnel (i.e., soldiers) boarding every bus in the metropolis for bomb check-up.

But then Gloriaetta was supposedly certain that the public would not mind the inconvenience, because this cute administration was only looking out for their safety.

Sure, boss, let's not stop at mere military or police inspection of buses. Let's do it in malls, churches, and even private cars. In fact, let's inspect every bag on sight.

Of course we do not mind the "inconvenience." We all do not want to die! But the effect of such a measure on our mindset can be worse than the actual bombings.

Makati will become an absolute war zone, similar to some cities in the Middle East, or entire countries in Africa.

The last time I checked, this country is still in Southeast Asia, one of the most—if not the most—progressive regions of the world.

But why can't we do some serious intelligence work, for once, if only to try to break down terrorist cells in the metropolis?

What? No money for that?

* * *

WORD is out that another foreign tobacco company is preparing a marketing offensive in the Philippines. I am not sure if it only wants to make pulmonologists happy.

It is also not yet clear whether or not the foreign maker of cancer, este, cigarettes *pala*, will tie up with a local group.

But that seems to be the trend, judging from the intense lobby in the Senate during the deliberation on the "sin" tax measure of this cute administration.

Said to have manipulated everything in the deliberation—behind the scene, of course—were some well-known figures from the academe, a former official of the Department of Finance, and a PR group.

To deflect public attention from their lobby, the well organized, and most probably well funded, group switched to attack mode against the tobacco giants here.

Those were the US firm Philip Morris, the biggest cigarette company in the world, and the local taipan Lucio Tan's Fortune Tobacco.

The two challengers of these two giants, no wonder, got a terrific break from the new sin tax law.

Now, none of my sources would say exactly how much they put up for such a lucky break, but lobbying in Congress, believe me, usually costs a lot of money.

* * *

DURING the "sin" tax law deliberation in the bicameral conference committee, a word was inserted in one of the provisions. And that word was "finally."

None of the senators, and for that matter, the congressmen, who probably had the IQ of button mushrooms, knew what its implication.

They probably thought they were just talking there at the committee about some stupid tax. What was that, talk and tax?

The insertion of the word "finally" would mean that, finally, the two challengers could attack the local market with new brands, paying for low, low tax rates.

You see, under the old law on excise tax on cigarettes—in which the word "finally" did not exist—only Congress could change the tax rates for every brand of cigarettes.

The "sin" tax system applies different rates on cigarette brands, depending on their selling price, so that the higher the retail price, the higher would be the tax rates.

For instance, the lowest tax rate was P2 per pack, and the highest was P25 per pack.

For any new brand to get one particular tax rate, you would need the approval of Congress. And how hard ... or rather, how much will it take to get anything from Congress, right?

* * *

UNDER the new "sin" tax law, the rates of the excise tax on a NEW brand of cigarette can now be set by—chanchararan—none other than the BIR itself.

The new law gives the BIR the authority to give out a temporary rate to a new brand.

To "FINALLY" (see, get it?) make it into a permanent rate, all the cigarette company has to do is to sell a "commercial quantity" of the brand for 18 months.

Based on a report reaching the BIR, however, it is easy to go around such a provision of the law. It already happened last year.

One foreign brand of cigarette was, well, "test marketed" somewhere in Bicol last September.

It got one of the low rates for excise tax, which meant that it would be sold at a low price, which could mean that it would be competitive in the crowded cigarette market.

The maker sold only 30 cases. And they said that was "commercial quantity?" Yes, they did, Apulid!

And so the brand, under the new law, after 18 months of selling such a funny commercial quantity, can FINALLY (there again) get the permanent low tax rates.

What does the cigarette company do henceforth? Well, it can simply raise the selling price while paying only a low tax rate. Wonderful!

* * *

JUST what exactly does the law mean by "commercial quantity?" That is now the new battlefield in the tobacco lobby.

The BIR, from what I heard, is trying to define "commercial quantity" in the implementing rules and regulations of the new "sin" tax law.

In fact, incoming Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima wants to review the rules, asking the DOF to wait for him, although a DOF official was trying hard to convince the present DOF secretary to sign the rules. Hmm.

Here's an idea how much the tobacco industry is willing to pay for the chance to market new brands at low tax rates.

Not too long ago, a cigarette company bought another cigarette company for hundreds of millions of pesos.

The target company didn't even have assets. All that the buying company wanted was the two cigarette brands of the target company.

Why was that? Well those brands were set—and I mean, almost forever—for the low tax rates. That's how much, to the tobacco sector, the permanent low tax rates should cost. You know, hundreds of millions of pesos.

Now, if that buyer was willing to spend that much for two brands, how much would two challengers pay for an unlimited number of new brands at low tax rates? You tell me!

Finance backs tax on more luxury items

From page B1

to regularly review and update the list of luxurious products and services.

"All over the world today, the tax base is being redefined, broadened and enlarged to capture the ever-changing behaviors and lifestyles of people, businesses and government," the congressman said in the bill's explanatory note.

Mitra said that with the budget problem of the government, it should come up with creative ways to generate revenue, but make sure not to burden too much those that belong to the low-income sectors of society.

The DOF, however, said there should be a clear distinction of what comprises a cosmetic surgery or services mainly for aesthetic purposes because some patients might declare the cosmetic surgeries they undertake as those resulting from accidents, which are not covered by the excise tax, the DOF explained.

Aside from including more products and services in the coverage of the excise tax, Mitra is also proposing that luxurious medical services be subject to the 10-percent value-added tax. While services rendered by doctors are currently exempted from VAT, he said medical services for aesthetic purposes like cosmetic surgery should be imposed a VAT since only the rich could afford these, he said.

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 16, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.6	5.2	4.5	4.5	597,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	30.5	30.5	30	30	1,482,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	58	59	58	58	682,700
China Banking Corp.	590	590	590	590	240
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	50	52	50	50	177,300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.67	0.88	0.67	0.76	52,370,000
International Exch. Bank	18.5	19.5	18.5	19.5	1,046,100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	37	39.5	37	39	6,763,600
Philippine National Bank	40	40	35	37.5	262,700
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	24,800
Security Bank Corp.	34.5	34.5	33	33	22,500
Union Bank of the Phil.	30	31.5	30	31	367,500
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.04	1.1	1.04	1.04	450,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	200	200	200	200	150
Manulife Financial Corp.	2470	2510	2470	2510	2,480
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2.14	2.14	2.12	2.12	38,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	135	136	135	135	29,360
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1830	1840	1830	1840	5,440
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.5	18.5	18	18	239,100
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.74	1.74	1.64	1.66	21,629,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	930	940	925	935	161,070
Ipeople Inc.	5	5	4.8	4.9	252,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.055	0.0575	0.0525	0.0525	6,900,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.04	0.042	0.04	0.04	22,800,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	10,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.7	3.85	3.6	3.6	19,539,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1435	1440	1405	1425	190,280
Ivantage Corp.	0.71	0.76	0.69	0.7	11,060,000
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	18,600,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	17.5	18	17.25	17.25	233,300
Manila Electric Co. B	28	28.5	26.5	27	2,928,400
Petron Corp.	3.85	3.95	3.75	3.75	9,786,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.34	2.42	2.34	2.42	61,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.64	1.64	1.6	1.6	1,257,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.94	1.96	1.94	1.94	770,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	100,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	7.3	7.4	7.2	7.3	2,400,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	200,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	60,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.62	0.66	0.56	0.57	5,770,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.05	4.4	4	4.05	8,059,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.44	1.44	540,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	94,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.95	3.95	3.9	3.9	221,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	36.5	38	36.5	37.5	858,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28.5	29	28	28	586,100
RFM Corp.	0.83	0.84	0.83	0.83	1,160,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	260,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	57.5	57	57.5	130,600
San Miguel Corp. B	80.5	81.5	80	80	337,600
Vitarich Corp.	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.31	500,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.016	0.016	0.011	0.013	1,165,700,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.017	0.017	0.012	0.013	130,600,000
Ayala Corp.	8.6	8.7	8.3	8.3	10,658,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.72	0.74	0.7	0.71	1,080,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.2	4.5	4.2	4.45	3,513,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	20,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.032	0.033	0.03	0.03	15,600,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	351,000
APC Group Inc.	0.43	0.44	0.39	0.39	14,860,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.009	0.009	0.0085	0.0085	210,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.39	0.43	0.39	0.43	260,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	15,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	35,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.91	0.95	0.91	0.95	100,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	10,700
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.165	0.195	0.165	0.165	9,700,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.3	1.42	1.2	1.22	123,360,000
A Brown Co. Inc.	0.85	0.92	0.85	0.9	170,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.23	0.25	0.22	0.22	2,030,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.26	0.26	9,780,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.7	0.71	0.65	0.65	7,890,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.75	4.75	4.2	4.2	4,645,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.06	0.07	0.0525	0.06	39,300,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.5	725,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	9.2	9.3	9.1	9.1	629,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	49.5	50.5	49	49	3,223,500
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.18	0.23	0.18	0.22	520,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.095	0.1	0.085	0.09	27,900,000
House of Investments Inc.	2.12	2.14	1.9	2.02	6,919,000
Ionics Inc.	1.8	1.86	1.8	1.8	1,063,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.65	3.2	3.5	7,074,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.32	2.38	2.26	2.26	1,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.94	1.94	1.76	1.78	9,018,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.62	0.67	0.58	0.58	381,490,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.28	0.28	700,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.62	1.32	1.32	170,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.5	0.54	0.36	0.41	15,260,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.92	1.06	0.92	1.04	950,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.55	0.58	0.51	0.54	2,420,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.165	0.185	0.16	0.16	25,540,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.225	0.24	0.215	0.23	10,140,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.34	0.38	0.31	0.37	6,000,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.02	1.02	0.96	0.96	210,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	3,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.86	1.86	1.8	1.8	351,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.94	0.94	0.93	0.93	410,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.0875	0.1	0.0825	0.0825	6,400,000
Pryce Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	470,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.2	0.24	0.2	0.2	580,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.26	1.48	1.26	1.4	87,391,000
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	8	13.25	8	13	52,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.24	1.38	1.18	1.2	7,562,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.85	0.86	0.8	0.8	5,940,000
Manila Jockey Club	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.5	37,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.39	0.42	0.38	0.38	6,850,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	17.5	17.75	17.25	17.5	1,144,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series K	10	10	10	10	800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	900
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.9	9.9	9.1	9.2	5,846,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.94	1	0.89	0.89	3,770,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.4	0.41	0.37	0.37	27,740,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.23	0.23	0.19	0.19	10,650,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.21	0.3	0.21	0.28	5,240,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.59	0.62	0.55	0.56	69,640,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.98	2	1.78	1.78	5,956,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.21	0.225	0.18	0.18	5,140,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.18	0.23	0.18	0.19	1,540,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.28	0.29	0.26	0.27	8,140,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.79	0.79	1,200,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.19	0.195	0.19	0.195	1,970,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.2	0.22	0.19	0.2	4,140,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.95	2.95	2.85	2.85	108,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.33	0.34	0.3	0.3	9,020,000
SM Development Corp.	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.9	1,257,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.3	8.4	8.2	8.4	11,657,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.5	1.5	1.2	1.3	952,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.34	1,326,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	114,800,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	7.8	7.8	7.1	7.2	587,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.5	9.5	9.2	9.2	27,000
Benguet Corp. B	18	18	18	18	3,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	4.35	4.35	4.3	4.3	33,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.41	0.42	0.39	0.39	7,310,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.46	0.48	0.43	0.43	22,620,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.023	0.023	0.021	0.021	346,200,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.032	0.032	0.03	0.03	740,400,000
Omico Corp.	0.0075	0.0085	0.007	0.0075	6,539,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.16	1.2	1.14	1.14	4,752,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.36	1.46	1.36	1.36	13,874,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	47	47.5	46	47	1,966,800
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.39	0.39	0.33	0.33	980,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	4,000,000
Interport Res.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	2,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	10,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.008	0.008	0.007	0.007	317,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0085	0.0085	0.008	0.008	13,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.39	190,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.43	0.43	0.42	0.42	700,000
Pacifica	0.013	0.014	0.012	0.012	17,500,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.6	2.65	2.6	2.65	151,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.13	0.145	0.13	0.135	64,700,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.4	0.45	0.38	0.4	1,390,000

DISCLOSURES

INTERNATIONAL Exchange Bank declared a cash dividend of P0.30 centavos per share. The record and payment date of the dividend will be announced later.

* * *

UNIWIDE Holdings Inc. announced their three new officers, lawyer Romarico I. Gatchalian as corporate secretary, Juluis P. Maling as chief compliance officer and Myracris G. Galang as chief financial officer.

* * *

MANULIFE Financial Corp. approved a quarterly shareholders' dividend amounting to $0.26 per share on the common shares payable on or after March 19 to shareholders of record at the close of business on Feb. 22.

* * *

ABOITIZ Equity Ventures Inc. board of directors approved the planned secondary offering to the public of its shares held in treasury. The declaration of cash dividend of P0.12 per share to all stockholders of record as of the close of business on March 12 and March 31 as the record date for stockholders who are entitled to vote at this year's annual stockholders meeting.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Co. will hold an investors' briefing on March 1, 2005, 2:30 p.m. at the Manila A&B Function Rooms, Shangri-La Hotel, Makati City.

* * *

EAST Asia Power Resources disclosed that they were unaware of any information relating to the unusual movement of their share price from P0.34 to P0.51 per share.

Compiled by Chona Galang, PDI Research

RP hopes to keep quantitative restrictions on rice imports

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINES made a headway in the negotiations for the retention of quantitative restrictions on rice imports under the World Trade Organization.

Philippine negotiators reported that the number of WTO-member countries opposing the Philippine position pushing for the QR retention had narrowed down to four, from nine.

The Philippine government, through its negotiators led by National Food Authority Administrator Gregorio Tan Jr., was able to sort out the main issues with five of the nine opposing countries. These were India, Pakistan, Egypt, Argentina and Canada.

"There was a meeting of the minds in our discussions with these countries. We are confident that we will reach a compromise with them soon," Tan told the INQUIRER in an interview yesterday.

The Philippine panel is working on the negotiations with the "critical four" such as the United States, Thailand, China and Australia.

QRs allow the Philippine government to limit the volume of the country's imports yearly to protect the interest of local farmers particularly during harvest seasons.

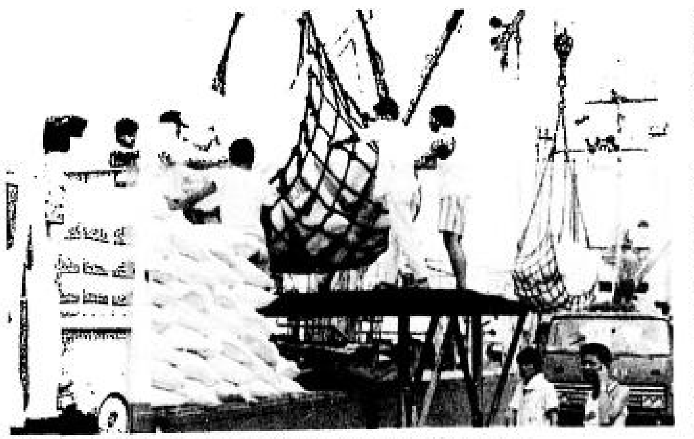
The lifting of QRs will allow the unlimited entry of rice into the country, with imports to be slapped tariffs.

Tan said the US, China, Thailand and Australia had asked the Philippines for country-specific rice export quotas in return for allowing Manila to maintain QRs on rice imports.

However, Tan said a country-specific rice export allocation could be given only as a "compensation" to a trade concession, as in the case of the rice export quota granted to Thailand two years ago in exchange for an increase in the Philippines' tariff rates on sugar.

In exchange for the rice export quota, Thailand, a leading sugar exporter, did not oppose a tariff increase proposal of the Philippines to the WTO.

In a separate interview, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said the Philippine negotiating team was considering an increase in the country's minimum access volume (MAV) allocation for rice to appease those opposing the retention of QRs.



QRs allow the country to limit volume of rice imports.

Court asked to nullify NTC rule on cable TV-content provider deals

By Clarissa S. Batino

CENTRAL CATV Inc., operator of SkyCable, said it would incur P10 million in losses due to a policy of the National Telecommunications Commission prohibiting exclusive contracts between cable TV operators and content providers.

The Lopez-owned Central CATV has asked the Quezon City Regional Trial Court to stop the NTC from further implementing the policy prohibiting cable TV operators from forging exclusive contracts with content providers.

In its petition to the court, the company said the exclusivity provisions in some contracts between cable TV operators and program providers were "not intended to create monopolies or combinations in restraint of trade."

The cable company entered into an exclusive arrangement with Solar Entertainment Corp. in 2002. The deal required the Lopez cable firm to pay Solar "not less than P10 million" for licenses and rights.

But in August 2004, a competitor of Central CATV's SkyCable questioned the exclusivity of the contract following the refusal of Solar Entertainment to provide Solar Sports Channel to another cable operator.

Central CATV said the Quezon City court should nullify the restrictive policy or at least issue a temporary restraining order or an injunction.

Otherwise, it said, the NTC circular would cause the company "grave and irreparable injury in the form of actual damages of not less than P10 million."

"The NTC circular is null and void for being clearly a transgression of the petitioner's constitutional right against impairment of contracts, an invalid exercise of the police power of state among others," said Central CATV in its petition.

"The provision is effectively a limitation and/or curtailment of a person's freedom to contract," the Lopez cable firm added.

Starting April, SkyCable said it would offer prepaid cable channels for as low as P300 a month.

SkyCable is the country's dominant cable TV channel with close to 500,000 subscribers nationwide.

Experts said the country had 13 million potential cable TV subscribers but the industry had recorded, so far, only about a million legitimate subscribers.

RP firms to gain from clean air deal

From page B1

Mechanism (CDM) that allows industrialized countries to meet their GHG reduction targets by investing in emission reduction "credits" from projects based in developing countries.

According to the Asian Development Bank, between $1.5 billion to $2.5 billion have been committed to the GHG reduction market and that this was expected to grow as the protocol's first commitment period of 2008-2012 approached.

During that period, 35 countries and the European Union are legally bound to reduce (or have emission reduction credits for) their combined emission of six major GHGs to below 1990 levels.

During a Kyoto Protocol awareness forum held yesterday at the ADB headquarters in Mandaluyong City, experts explained that the CDM was a market-based financial instrument that gives investors the opportunity for offsetting emissions at a fraction of the cost for doing this in their own countries.

The ADB said that, for example, lowering carbon dioxide emissions by a ton in an industrialized country typically costs between $50 and $400 while this costs only between $0.50 and $20 in developing country since most of them "still use very inefficient and inexpensive technology."

Speaking before the forum, Environment Secretary Mike Defensor said there were about 14 potential CDM-eligible projects that have applied for endorsements to sell emission-reduction credits with the Environmental Management Bureau.

"Three of these have been endorsed to the World Bank Prototype Carbon Financing (or WB-PCF, which buys credits)," Defensor said.

The three projects are the 25-megawatt wind farm in Ilocos Norte, and two bagasse (sugar cane waste)-fired power plants—a 50-MW generator in Victorias City and a 30-MW unit in Talisay City, both in Negros Island.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr., who was also a guest at the forum, said North Wind's 25-MW project in Bangui Bay has made history last December when it became the first project to sell emission reduction credits to WB-PCF.

"The company sold 356,000 credits at about $5 each (or $1.78 million)," Perez said. "North Wind sold only half of its credit potential probably because it was waiting for opportunities on the expected appreciation of credit prices."

Globe's ...

From page B1

Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines, Unicef and the Philippine National Red Cross.

"G-Cash is tailor-fit to the average Filipino's texting, buying and payment habits, making it as comfortable and easy to use as the mobile phone he now no longer leaves home without," Globe president Gerardo Ablaza said.

Globe is the GSM Association's first awardee of the "Best Mobile Messaging Service." It was also the only Filipino telecom firm cited in this year's GSM Awards.

Ablaza received the award for Globe last Feb. 15 at Les Ambassadeurs, Palais des Festivals in Cannes, France.

The event was part of the annual 3GSM Congress, a gathering of CEOs and decision-makers in the global telecommunications industry. Napoleon Nazareno, president of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., had been voted as the new president of GSM Association.

Globe said an international panel of judges, composed of independent industry experts, executives and analysts determined the 13 winners for 13 categories, out of 61 finalists and 480 entries.

Last year, Globe's electronic load value transfer service "Share-a-Load" won the "Most Innovative Service of the Year" award in the Asia Mobile News Awards.

The second-rank mobile company was also named the "Best GSM Carrier" of the TelecomAsia awards in 2004.

Globe wireless business group head Ferdinand dela Cruz said the company would sign more tie-ups with the BIR and other entities to expand the market for G-Cash.

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5.0MM - 9,999,999	6.250	6.500	6.625	6.750
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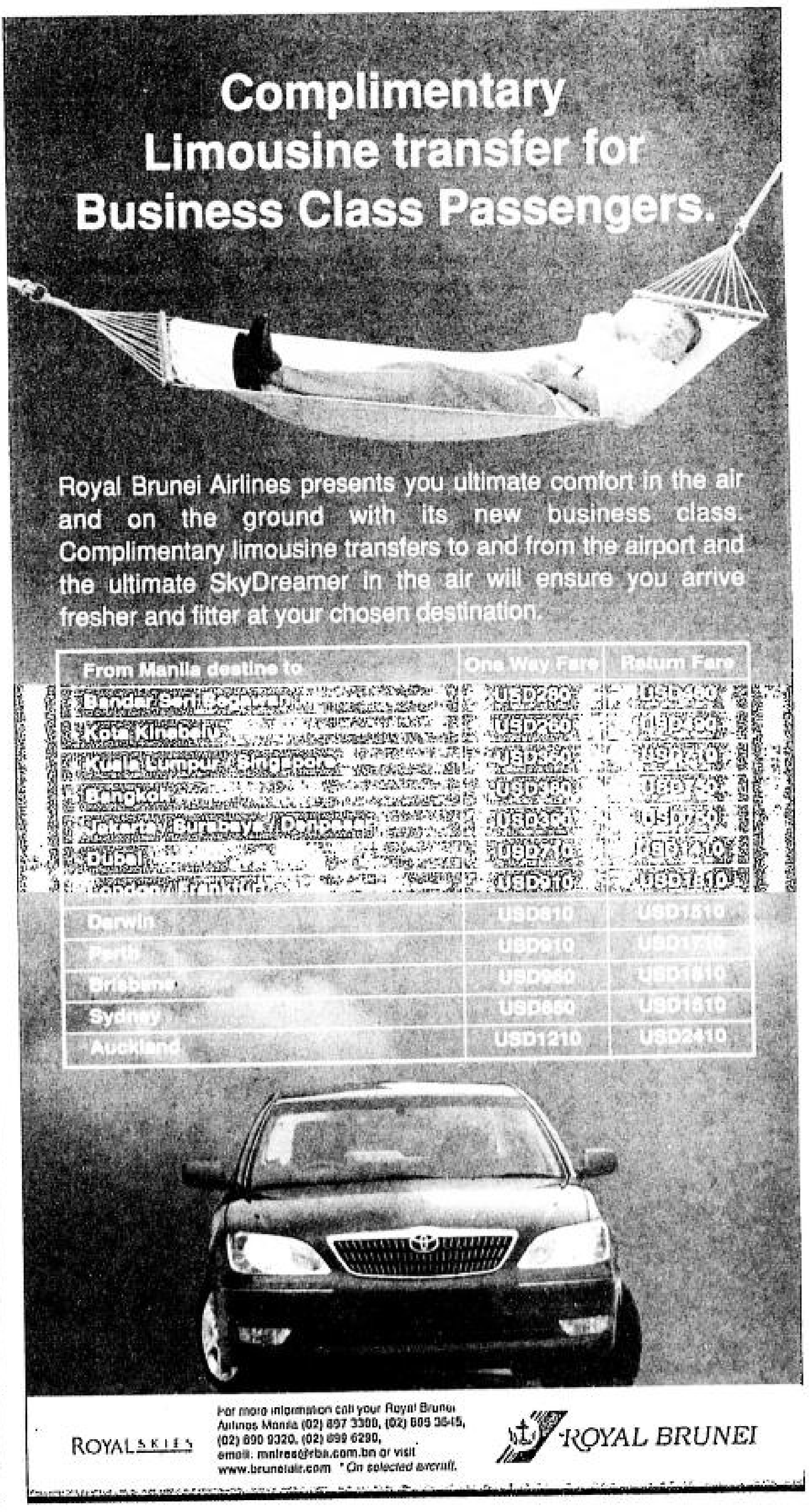

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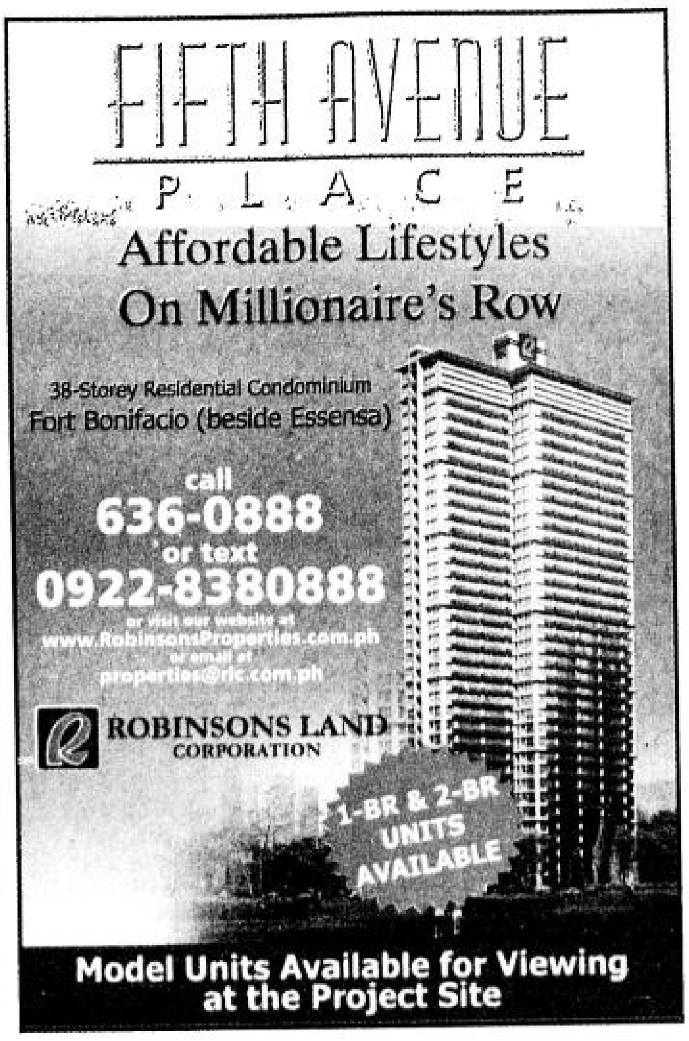

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Japan in recession, hit by slower consumption

JAPANESE businessmen and women get out from a commuter train and head to their office at a Tokyo railway station. The Japanese economy entered a technical recession after previous Gross Domestic Product figures were revised down to show three consecutive quarters of negative growth hit by slower exports and consumption, cabinet office announced. AFP

TOKYO—The Japanese economy was in recession for most of 2004 as official figures Wednesday showed three successive quarters of negative growth, upsetting forecasts as slower exports and consumption hit output.

The Cabinet Office said the economy shrank 0.1 percent in the three months to December compared with the previous quarter, giving an annualized drop of 0.5 percent.

Analyst forecasts had been for 0.1 percent and 0.5 percent growth.

Net exports—exports minus imports—and consumer spending each contributed a negative 0.2 percentage points to the GDP data in the period.

The government also revised the July-September quarter figures to a 0.3 percent contraction from the previous estimate of 0.1 percent growth, following a fall of 0.2 percent in the previous three months, so putting the country into recession.

The widely accepted technical definition of a recession is two consecutive quarters of economic contraction but officials said the government was not ready to use the word as Japan worked on figures that include more than just GDP data.

The three quarters' downturn is the worst since the economy contracted for four consecutive quarters from April-June 2001 to January-March 2002, when it was hit by the bursting of the information technology bubble.

For the whole of 2004, however, GDP expanded 2.6 percent, the highest growth rate since 1996, when it was up 3.4 percent.

"There is no change to our understanding that the economy is basically on a gradual recovery path," Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told reporters.

"The economy has some soft patches but if you look at the bigger picture, it is in a recovery stage," Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Heizo Takenaka told a news conference.

Takenaka said he would not say the economy was in recession "because we cannot make a call by just looking at the GDP figures. We make a more comprehensive judgement."

Japan uses GDP figures, diffusion indices and other data to assess the state of the economy, Cabinet Office officials said.

"The current conditions are mostly in line with our view of the economy—it is largely leveling off in a slightly softer tone," Takenaka said.

Economists said depressed consumer spending in the last quarter of 2004 was due to a series of natural disasters, such as a devastating earthquake and a record number of typhoons, along with a relatively warm start to the winter.

A quake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale jolted the northern province of Niigata on October 23, leaving 40 people dead and 2,857 injured while disrupting production at several major companies.

Officials also noted positives in the figures, with the broad measure of inflation— the GDP deflator—showing a fall of 0.3 percent from a year earlier, a marked improvement on the minus 1.3 percent of the previous quarter.

"Mild deflation is continuing but there are also signs that it is moving towards the exit," Takenaka said.

Another positive was corporate capital spending which rose 0.7 percent in the three months to December after 0.4 percent growth in the previous quarter.

The decline in household consumption apparently reflected one-off factors such as the typhoons and earthquake, said Takenori Shimada, economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute.

"I would say that in the January-March quarter household spending will recover, thus contributing to economic recovery," he said.

Some economists blamed what they described as volatile GDP data on the government's changing of its calculation method last year.

"I think that it is fair to say that growth has been soft for six months but I think it's a stretch to say there has been a recession," said Richard Jerram, chief economist at Macquarie Securities.

He said it was "surprising" to see three straight quarters of negative growth, especially after corporate profit surveys had shown sharp gains.

Going forward, Jerram too, said the economy was likely to pick up. *AFP*

US retail sales declined in January

WASHINGTON—US retail sales dipped 0.3 percent in January as automobile sales fell sharply, but purchases outside the volatile car sector gained a healthy 0.6 percent, a government report showed on Tuesday.

While seasonally adjusted retail sales were the weakest since a matching 0.3 percent drop in August, the gain outside of autos marked the strongest rise since October and surpassed Wall Street expectations for a 0.4 percent climb.

Auto sales, which account for nearly a quarter of overall retail sales, have swung widely in recent months as incentives to buy new cars were offered, then retracted.

"As soon as manufacturers try to scale back incentives to improve profitability, sales fall precipitously, forcing manufacturers to reinstate them," said Paul Ashworth, senior international economist at Capital Economics in London.

The Commerce Department's report said sales of cars and parts fell 3.3 percent in January, partly reversing December's incentive-fueled 4-percent surge.

Healthy demand at clothing and general merchandise stores, and gas stations offset declines in sales of furniture, electronics and appliances, and building materials.

Analysts said the data showed consumer spending—while slowing from 2004's robust pace—was on a solid footing and economic growth off to a good start in 2005.

Two reports, also on Tuesday, on chain store sales in early February confirmed Americans were still shopping.

"We continue to see healthy gains but nothing (like) what we saw in the second half in 2004," said Parul Jain, deputy chief economist at Nomura Securities International in New York.

"It is consistent with our expectations that the first-quarter consumer spending would slow to 3.00 percent-3.50 percent."

US Treasury prices dipped after the retail news, and slid further after a separate report showed a sharp decline in foreign purchases of government debt late last year.

Net inflows of capital into US assets eased in December but still remained high enough to finance the nation's current account deficit, Treasury Department data showed.

Still, much of the market is awaiting testimony from Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan on Wednesday and did not focus on the economic data.

A separate report showed growth in New York state's factories slowed slightly in early February and the pace of hiring also slowed even as overall activity remained strong.

As new orders eased, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's general business conditions index of Empire Manufacturing Survey dipped to 19.2 this month from 20.1 in January. The outlook also dimmed, the regional Fed bank said.

"Future indexes continued to project strong optimism about conditions six months ahead, but expectations were somewhat lower than those reported over much of the past year," the New York Fed said.

Ashworth said the report offered good news on inflation, with the prices paid index falling to a 12-month low and the prices received index dropping sharply.

"The latter was particularly encouraging since it more than reversed a surge in January and, consequently, soothed fears that manufacturers' pricing power was on the rise," Ashworth said.

The Commerce Department also said US business inventories rose 0.2 percent in December, slightly less than forecast, as brisk sales kept stocks lean.

But inventories of wholesalers and non-auto retailers were significantly stronger than expected, prompting some analysts to raise their forecasts for gross domestic product in the final quarter of 2004, since inventory-building boosts economic growth.

"We now expect fourth-quarter GDP to be revised up to about 3.7 percent to 3.8 percent, a touch stronger than the 3.5 percent we had been tracking prior to the release of these inventory data," Merrill Lynch economists said.

Two separate reports showed recent sales at US chain stores on an uptrend, as business at discount and department stores continued to drive demand.

Sales rose 0.1 percent last week, compared with a 2.2 percent increase the previous week, the International Council of Shopping Centers and UBS said in a joint report.

"Customer traffic continues to be robust in February as consumers—especially in the Northeast and Midwest—are out shopping," said Michael Niemira, ICSC's chief economist and director of research. *Reuters*

Japanese recession lifts US dollar, hits Asian stocks

SINGAPORE—Tokyo stocks fell and the dollar and bonds rose on Wednesday on data showing Japan had fallen into recession, but trading was cautious ahead of comments from Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan.

MSCI's index of shares elsewhere in Asia edged up to a fresh seven-year peak, helped by gains on Wall Street, as shares in miner BHP Billiton rose 1.75 percent in Australia on stronger-than-expected profits.

European stocks were seen opening lower ahead of Greenspan's testimony to Congress later in the day.

Stock traders in Japan sold companies dependent on domestic demand after data showed the world's second-largest economy had slipped into its fourth recession in seven years.

Tokyo's Nikkei average slipped 0.38 percent to 11,601.68, led by a 2-percent fall in real estate firm Mitsui Fudosan Co.

Foreign exchange traders bought dollars on the weak GDP figure, but volumes were modest as the market awaited Greenspan's testimony on the state of the US economy.

Traders and analysts are keen to hear what he says about the pace of monetary tightening and the current account deficit.

"Any acknowledgment that the narrowing of the deficit is part of a trend should help the dollar," said Naomi Fink, senior currency analyst at BNP Paribas in Tokyo.

The dollar stood near 105.03 yen compared with late New York levels around 104.40. The euro also gained against the yen, climbing to around 136.69 yen from 136 yen before the Japanese growth data. The dollar was steady against the euro at around $1.301.

US crude oil futures inched up in thin Asian trading, but traders said the gains would be limited as weekly oil data was expected to show a rise in crude oil stocks in the United States.

Shares crept higher by as much as a third of a percent in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea following strength on Wall Street.

US stocks were driven to 2005 closing highs by upbeat January retail sales data and an unsolicited $3.25 billion bid for Circuit City Stores Inc. from a private investment firm.

Japanese gross domestic product shrank 0.1 percent in the October-December quarter, contrary to expectations for growth of 0.1 percent.

But a 0.7 percent quarter-on-quarter rise in capital spending, bolstered by healthy corporate profits, helped tech shares. Toshiba Corp. rose 1.6 percent and Hitachi gained 1.5 percent.

"I don't think the data is so bad, contrary to the reaction in the currency market. I'm positive because the data showed capital spending grew for the third straight quarter," said Akio Yoshino, general manager at Societe General Asset Management.

"The firmness in exports will likely prop up corporate earnings and maintain the good pace of corporate spending, and that will support the economy," he said.

Cash Japanese government bond (JGB) prices jumped on the weak figure, reversing five straight days of losses, but caution ahead of a two-day Bank of Japan policy board meeting, starting on Wednesday, kept enthusiasm in check. *Reuters*

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Center for Health Development Bicol
BICOL MEDICAL CENTER
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Naga City

February 4, 2005

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

No. 2005-05

PROCUREMENT OF VARIOUS MEDICAL, SURGICAL, AND DENTAL SUPPLIES

1. The Bicol Medical Center (BMC), through the General Appropriations Act of 2005 intends to apply the sum of ELEVEN MILLION EIGHT HUNDRED THREE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED THIRTY FOUR & 40/100 (P11, 803, 734.40), chargeable against the Government of the Philippines (GOP) Funds for the Procurement of Various Medical, Surgical, Dental Supplies
2. The Bicol Medical Center (BMC) now invites sealed Bids from eligible suppliers/manufacturers and exclusive distributors who are qualified to participate for the Procurement of Various Medical, Surgical and Dental Supplies. Copies of the List of Various Medical, Surgical and Dental and Supplies, with specifications and quantities are available at the BAC Secretariat c/o Supply Section, Bicol Medical Center, Naga City
3. Delivery of the aforesaid goods shall be within *FIFTEEN (15) working days* upon receipt of the approved Purchase Orders (POs). The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Clause 5, Section I, Instruction to Bidders.
4. Eligibility of Prospective Bidders to participate will be based on compliance to eligibility requirements, using pass/fail non-discretionary criteria, as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (RA 9184), *The Government Procurement Reform Act (GPRA)*, and is open to all organizations with at least sixty (60%) percent interest belonging to citizens of the Philippines. The process for eligibility check is described in Clause 12 Section II of the Instructions to Bidders. In accordance with the IRR-A of RA 9184, only those Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check shall be opened and the Purchase Order (PO) awarded to the Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bid, provided the Bidder concerned passes the post qualification process.
5. Interested Bidders who wish to inspect the Bidding Documents and obtain further information should contact the BAC Secretariat c/o Supply Section, Bicol Medical Center, Naga City, telephone No. 473-2334, 473-8936, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mondays to Fridays.
6. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders, from February 16 to March 1, 2005, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Thousand Pesos (Php 2,000.00) and submission of a written application to the following address

   Dr. RODOLFO C. URSUA
   Chairman
   Bids and Awards Committee
   Bicol Medical Center
   Naga City
7. The BMC shall hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties, on March 1, 2005 at 9:00 a.m., at the Library Bicol Medical Center Naga City
8. Bids must be delivered to the above address on March 16, 2005 not later than 9:00 a.m., at the Auditorium. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in an amount at least equal to, and not lower than, a percentage of the approved budget, in any of the following forms/terms
   - a) Cash certified check cashier's/manager's check, Bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit - One Percent (1%)
   - b) Bank Guarantee - One & a Half Percent (1-1/2%)
   - c) GSIS Surety Bond - Two & a Half Percent (2-1/2%)
9. The BMC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to issuance of Purchase Order (PO) without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd) RODOLFO C. URSUA, MD, FPCS, FPUA
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Feb 17 & 23, 2005)

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PD Ref No.: PB0505111-EL0004
PR No. ATO-05-008916

The **NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE FOR CORPORATE TRANSCO**, wishes to invite interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid on the items listed below:

Supply and Delivery of Spare Parts for BK-117 C1 Helicopter

ABC: P4,862,100.00

1. Bid Documents will be available for issuance starting February 16, 2005 to March 15, 2005 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the BAC Secretariat Office, National Transmission Corporation, Materials Management Division, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City, upon payment of non-refundable fee of **Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00)** per set.
2. Deadline for submission, receipt and opening of bids shall be on or before 10:00 a.m. of March 16, 2005 at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City. If the date is a non-working day or declared non-working day, the new deadline for submisson shall be announced through a Bid Bulletin. Submission of documents must be clear, legible and readable. Late submission and/or incomplete application shall not be accepted
3. Pre-bid conference will be held on March 4, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Ave. corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City.
4. All particulars relative to the eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A of Republic Act 9184.
5. TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
6. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) ANTONIO G. LABAYANI
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Feb 17 & 23, 2005)

Skills gap weigh on economies, survey says

NEW YORK—The world's labor pool is receding as veteran workers to leave the work force, posing a threat to the global economy and exposing a potential gap between skilled and unskilled workers, according to a survey released on Tuesday.

In three years, the baby boomer generation in the United States, along with workers in Europe and Asia, will reach 62 years of age, the average retirement age in those parts of the world, said Deloitte Services.

More than 70 percent of 123 poll respondents said incoming workers with inadequate skills are the greatest threat to business over the next three years, according to the survey.

Retiring baby boomers were cited by over 60 percent of respondents as the top threat to business.

"The widening skills gap, particularly among the categories of workers who disproportionately drive companies' growth and performance, is a global phenomenon that will create unprecedented challenges for businesses," said Ainar Aijala, vice chair of Deloitte Consulting, in a statement.

A third of US companies anticipate losing around one in every 10 workers to retirement by 2008, the survey said.

Highly skilled and experienced veteran workers will often be replaced by inexperienced younger workers who will not be able to contribute right away to the success of a business.

Low birth rates in Europe and the single-child policy in China are contributing to the draining of the global labor supply, the survey said.

The survey was conducted in late December and early January. *Reuters*

People, Events & Products

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Aries Espinosa

PLDT Vibe Promo Plan 99 brings Internet to masses

MORE Filipinos can now enjoy the power and potential of the Internet as PLDT's dial up service PLDT Vibe Promo Plan 99 offers 270 hours of Internet a month for only P99.

PLDT Vibe Promo Plan 99 now becomes the most affordable postpaid narrowband Internet service in the country, as PLDT Vibe drops its dial up rates to an astonishing low for only P3.30 a day. New PLDT Vibe Promo Plan 99 subscribers will be able to enjoy the special introductory P99 rate for the first three (3) months of subscription.

This offer gives unbeatable value and speed. The Vibe Promo Plan 99 is good for the first three (3) months if subscription is activated during the promo period until April 30. After which, the subscriber will be automatically enrolled to Vibe Plan 220 starting on the fourth month until the lock-in period of 12 months is completed.

"This is a revolutionary development not only for PLDT, but also for the whole country as well because we are bringing the Internet to more Filipinos than ever before. They can now research online, e-mail each other, share files and transact business no matter what the distance without the cost and time restraints. With PLDT Vibe Promo Plan 99, they will have the world at their fingertips," says Cristina Balingit, PLDT AVP for retail marketing.

Congressman Joseph Santiago shares the same vision as the Catanduanes representative stressed the need for the government to help bring down the cost of Internet use to encourage more Filipinos to go online.

Currently, the Philippines has more than 2.2 million regular Internet users, a seven fold increase from the 300,000 users from 2000. But the former commissioner of the National Telecommunications Commission emphasized that unlike other nations in the region, the Philippines' Internet market penetration rate "remains very poor at only 2.6 percent of the country's 84.2 million population.

"The only way for us to stimulate Internet use is by reducing further the cost of local (Internet) access," Santiago said.

PLDT echoes Santiago's sentiment and chooses to realize it with PLDT Vibe Promo Plan 99. "We want to connect Filipinos to the rest of the world by giving them a more fulfilling Internet experience. In making PLDT Vibe Promo Plan 99's monthly subscription fee more affordable, we can make this possible," says Cristina Balingit.

With the dramatic price off, PLDT assures subscribers that they will continue to benefit from the same fast, easy and reliable Internet access as they do now.

"There is no need to worry because PLDT has the technology and the network infrastructure to support this massive endeavor," says Cristina Balingit. "We are also continuously monitoring and upgrading our system to make sure that ours subscribers nationwide receive optimum Internet service from PLDT Vibe at all times," she adds.

Aside from the postpaid Vibe Internet plans, PLDT introduced the PLDT Vibe Pay Per Surf (PPS), which is a breakthrough in narrowband technology that automatically makes all PLDT landlines Internet ready thereby giving Filipinos a quick and effortless online access whenever they need it, wherever they are.

With PLDT Vibe PPS, there is no need to purchase a prepaid Internet card, rush to the nearest Internet café for emergency online access nor apply for a subscription.

Users need only to hook up their PLDT residential landline to the modem and double click the PLDT Vibe dialer. Once the connection is made, they can start surfing, downloading, e-mailing, chatting and playing online games instantly.

PLDT Vibe PPS simplifies the log-on process by employing a single username (PLDT), password (Vibe) and access number (101-300) for all users. PLDT Vibe fees are also incorporated into the monthly PLDT phone bill, giving users utmost convenience when settling payments.

Discover the Philippines' most affordable and most convenient dial-up access today. To know more about the various PLDT Vibe products and services call 171 or visit www.pldtmypad.com for details.

REGINE TOLENTINO ENDORSES EXOFAT FORTE AND NUTRAFIT

New image model for Exofat forte and Nutrafit Regine Tolentino, regular co-host of Unang Hirit is shown shaking hands with Shiela Mae Velilla, CEO of Biolink Pharma during the contract signing held recently at Mario's Restaurant in Morato Ave, Quezon City. Also shown are (seated) Art Tolentino, CEO Alphamed; Gina Maristela; Regine Tolentino; Shiela Mae Velilla, CEO Biolink Pharma; (standing) Tess Garlitos, business development manager, Biolink Pharma and Joyce Lopez, sales manager, Biolink Pharma. Exofat forte and Nutrafit are now available at Mercury drugstores and Ellen's Aesthetic Center. For more information, call 411-4448 or 413-5079. Biolink Pharma is located at unit 1207 President Tower Condominium, Timog Ave, Quezon City.

The Best Musi
across the
Dr. Rogelio M. Florete,DBM(hc)

BOMBO CONFAB

Media tycoon, Dr. Rogelio Florete, DBM(hc), was crystal clear in his state of the network address which he delivered to station executives during the opening of Bombo Radyo Philippines' annual Top Level Management Conference in Island Cove Resort, Bacoor Cavite last Jan. 4 to 8, when he said, 'The Chinese phrase 'wei-ji', which literally means crisis has two intrinsic features - 'wei' meaning danger and 'ji' meaning opportunity.' Indeed Bombo Radyo Philippines, the country's No. 1 Radio Network, has taken 'wei-ji' to heart as it rolled up its sleeves, got down to work, and mapped out strategic plans for a more dynamic 2005 despite the nation's lingering economic turmoil. This year, expect better programs, bigger promos and the unceasing and unconditional public service and entertainment for the Filipino people.

COLUMBIA HOLDS MARKETING CONVENTION IN CAMBODIA

Columbia International Food Products Inc president Reynaldo Go and Elvira Go of marketing pose with their distributors outside the majestic temples of Angkor Wat in the Kingdom of Cambodia, held from Jan. 31 to Feb. 2. Columbia has been in the market since 1937 and is presently aggressive in manufacturing and marketing quality products like V Fruit, V Fresh, Charap, Champi, Potchi, Kooky, Frutos and Frooty that are loved by millions of Filipinos nationwide.

APC anti-piracy campaign

TWELVE independent local artists have teamed up with Asia Pacific College in their drive against music piracy. A CD album of 12 new compositions have been produced by APC to be distributed for free in exchange for the surrender of pirated discs.

APC's marketing director Gerard Cadlum stresses the need to protect intellectual property rights particularly now that the course on AB Multimedia Arts has been attracting scores of students wanting to go into graphic design, web design, advertising, digital arts, film authoring, and other related jobs in the field of multimedia arts.

The compilation, entitled "Dose" is the result of the collaboration between APC and local artists including Kjuan, SVC, Plane Divides The Sky, Spongecola, Jeepney Joyride, 13 Needles, Chili T's, Comet's Tale, Third World Project, The Happy Meals, Dicta License, and Kapatid.

"Dose" features "Surface", "Keep on Falling", "From Tokyo", "Prom Night", "Hoon's Joint", "Best Thought Pun", "Undiscarded", "Prayer", "22", "Jeep Nating Masaya", "Cab One", and "Parang Bula".

"Dose" will be distrubted for free. Just surrender one (1) pirated CD in exchange for one (1) "Dose" CD to Asia Pacific College, Marketing Department, No. 9 Humabon Place, Magallanes, Makati City. Contact 852-9670 to 71 for details.

Berkley, Family First certified as using only original software

THE BUSINESS Software Alliance (BSA), an organization dedicated to promoting a safe and legal digital world, recently awarded Berkley International Philippines and all its subsidiaries, namely, Life, Plans and Family First Inc the Software Asset Management (SAM) Advantage Certification. This is in recognition of the company's efforts to implement a model SAM practice.

In compliance with BSA's guidelines to multinationals and local companies, the company's Information Services Division (ISD) performed a rigid and thorough auditing of its software to maximize their value and to better utilize existing investments. In performing SAM, the company addressed planning and budgeting matters for software purchases and ensured that the company uses genuine software only.

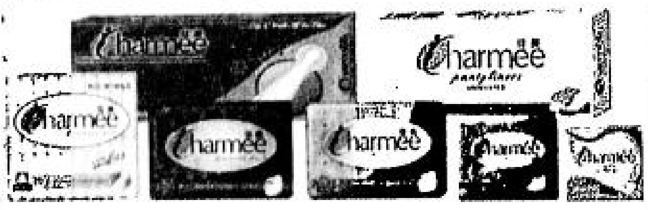
According to Berkley's VP - chief information officer, Adnelle Valeza, undergoing SAM is in keeping with the company's avowed mission of integrity. "Piracy brings with it a chain of negative results not only for any industry where it is practiced but to the national economy as a whole. We do not want to be a party to it that is why we ensure that our offices use only genuine software," Valeza said.

The Berkley Group is majority-owned by W.R. Berkley Corp, a Fortune Top 500 firm, which is a leader in the property and casualty insurance business in the United States.

ProductFILES

Charmeeing packages bloom

COLORFUL and vibrantly packed Charmee feminine protection products catch your eyes at leading supermarkets groceries and drugstores nationwide. The switch in designs was made to further enhance the brand Charmee and the attractiveness of the packaging via its color for high recall recognition which is attuned to a Charmee personality - trendy, cool, active, hip and on the go. Charmee feminine protection products are exclusively distributed by JS Unitrade Merchandise Inc a company of First SLP Holdings Inc.



Bits Clips

AMCI 22nd anniversary

AMCI Mountaineering Club Inc celebrates its 22nd Anniversary on Feb. 19 and 20, at Mengie's White Beach Resort, Talipanan, Puerto Galera. Dubbed as "New year, new beginnings!", this year's anniversary has several activities in store such as climbing, biking, diving and a 3-man Adventure Race entitled "The Talipanan Adventure". Interested participants may register with Loree Villarama (0917-8588515) or Abby Yu (0920-9135227).

Italianni's new branches

FOOD lovers, there's another great reason to celebrate. Italianni's Restaurant opened its newest branches at Unit 1, CKB Center, Sct. Rallos corner Tomas Morato on Feb. 7 and at the ground floor of Gateway Mall in Araneta Center on Feb. 12. And as in every Italianni's restaurant, the new QC branches adhere to the Grand Credo (Guests Requests Are Never Denied). Italianni's also recently launched its branch at Eastwood Avenue in Libis.

e-Services Philippines 2005

E-SERVICES Philippines, the country's largest IT enabled services (ITES) and outsourcing expo, will take place Feb. 17 to 18, at the Edsa Shangri-La Hotel, Manila. For more information, contact Citem, the trade promotions arm of the DTI and organizer of the event at 832-5044 and/or 831-2201 local 301 or visit www.e-servicesphils.com.

'Training the Trainer'

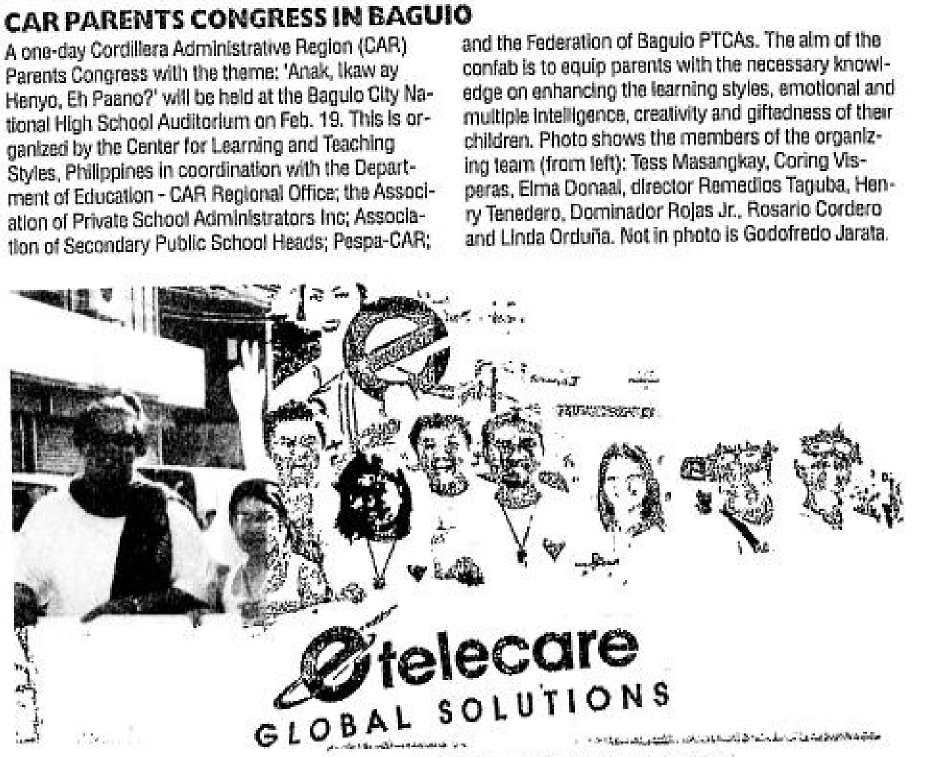
KAIZEN Management Systems Inc will conduct a seminar on "Training the Trainer" on Feb. 17 and 18, at the Traders Hotel Manila. The course exposes the would-be trainer in effectively handling the training cycle and evolving a training program that ties-in with the needs and expectations of the trainees in relation to the thrust of the organization. Interested parties may call Alma or Frenzie at telephone numbers 687-7059 to 60 or e-mail at blukaizen@vasia.com.

FGAPI membership meeting

THE FLAT Glass Alliance of the Phils Inc (FGAPI) will have its Annual Membership Meeting on Feb. 24, at 6 p.m. at Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila. This year, FGAPI is planning more projects and programs designed to benefit its general membership. The First Glass Caravan is slated on Feb. 17 to 19.

CAR PARENTS CONGRESS IN BAGUIO

A one-day Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) Parents Congress with the theme: 'Anak, Ikaw ay Henyo, Eh Paano?' will be held at the Baguio City National High School Auditorium on Feb. 19. This is organized by the Center for Learning and Teaching Styles, Philippines in coordination with the Department of Education - CAR Regional Office; the Association of Private School Administrators Inc; Association of Secondary Public School Heads; Pespa-CAR; and the Federation of Baguio PTCAs. The aim of the confab is to equip parents with the necessary knowledge on enhancing the learning styles, emotional and multiple intelligence, creativity and giftedness of their children. Photo shows the members of the organizing team (from left): Tess Masangkay, Coring Visperas, Elma Donaal, director Remedios Taguba, Henry Tenedero, Dominador Rojas Jr., Rosario Cordero and Linda Orduña. Not in photo is Godofredo Jarata.



ETELECARE SPONSORS SINULOG CELEBRATION IN CEBU

eTelecare Global Solutions, the world's most awarded and largest Asia-based call center company, co-sponsored the recently concluded 25th Sinulog Celebration in Cebu City. This included participation in the annual festival's famous 'Higante' competition, with over 70 eTelecare employees accompanying their entry, a headset-wearing Queen Juana, throughout the 4.3-kilometer Mardi Gras route while distributing eTelecare token fans to well-wishers and other parade participants. Photo shows members of the eTelecare contingent with their 'Higante' entry, which turned out to be one of the most popular with tourists and Cebu residents alike.

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NEWLY ARRIVED PROVINCIAL MAIDS MIDWIFE NURSE YAYA COOK LABA H'GIRL/BOY DRIVER SCREENED W/CLEAR. CALL RUBY 8735062•8737057•8737055

HOUSEHOLD JOBS

ANGEL MAIDS 4213253

HI PAY MAID, YAYA 732-67-50

Best Driver Maid 4547542

Best Maid,Yaya,Driver 4384809

Help Agency 532-1947 • 532-2971

Low Rate Maid 9287096

NEED MAIDS 0915-5544777

BEST MAIDS 8294261

Yaya, Cook H'maid 8957507

LIPAT BAHAY

•731-6833•LIPAT

L-BAHAY 9206784 4540520

L-BAHAY 8383742/09208449984

P1200/TRIP 742-14-57

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

COMM'L/RESDL

PASIG

PRIME PROPERTY
418sqm 5Dr 2Sty Apt. infrnt of Pamantasan ng Lunsod ng Pasig 09189422422•09178212826

HOUSE & LOT

PAYABLE THROUGH BANK, IN-HOUSE AND PAG-IBIG
"YOUR DREAM HOME AT A DREAM PRICE"
NOVALICHES CALOOCAN & SAN JOSE BULACAN
4171637• 09184529306

MAKATI

MAKATI VILLAGES BEST BUY Investment 0918-9392979

MANILA

NEAR LA SALLE BnewTwnhse/3stry:3br:3tb/grge/deck P3.610M up 8903461

MARIKINA

Bnew 4BR 3TB 2.8M 9487112

PASIG

Capitolyo 6BR 16M 631-3496

QUEZON CITY

FILINVEST II Q.C. 260m^2 4BR 5TB P24M 2-sty 6319877 9103263 / 09175220223 Neg.

•Sikatuna Vil. #81 Mahiyain• 9210255 9219967 9209822

BATANGAS

2stry w/ s.pool & warehouse 1,200 sqm 0915-4231999

LAGUNA

BINAN P400T/mo 5201792

CONDO/TWNHSE

MAKATI

1.1M C5 Nr The Fort
10T/mo. or 4Yrs. No Int. or 10% D.P. LIPAT AGAD 2-4BR 15min Fr Mktl 0917-8313226

EXEC. RESDL CONDO
P3.5M 4BR 181m^2 w/Parking Near Makati, Resort Type LITO: 0918-5251365 • 873-6426

MAKATI CONDO RENT/SALE
410-8395 / 0919-8504468

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

CONDO/TWNHSE

MAKATI

MKT NR AYALA
BnewTwnhse/3stry/3br/2 1/2tb/grge P3.720M up 8903461 loc 34

RESORT TYPE CONDO 2-4BR GlobalCT nrDport 1.0M Up Comp't Ameni't's Rent2Own PG-IBG Ok! 09206438545

RUSH COMM'L CONDOS
140m^2 G/F Valero Salcedo Vill., Mktl 2 Parks 210m^2 Ofl. Ortigas Ctr., Pasig Cheap 6471240 • 4395075 • 09175312376

MANILA

Malate Condo Rush @ 3.5M New-BR-Pkg 0917-7441292

PASIG

Class A bes. Makro Cainta tescorealty.com 09275337250

QUEZON CITY

CUBAO Condo 1.5M 9126976

EASTWOOD 2BR 3BA + Mds Rm + Lndry Rm 77m^2 Panoramic River View 24Hr Sec 4.7M neg 09184845443

NEW FA-232 4BR 3TB 3CG 3STY 6.9M Sct. Area Call 7119051 • 0917-9892974

SIKATUNA
Brand New 3BR
near LRT & QC Hall
658-2410 • 0921-4454810
921-5328 • 0916-6496838

SAN JUAN

TWNHSE FA-140 3BR 2TB 2STY 2CG 3M G'hills Call 7119051 • 0917-9892974

LOT

MAKATI

SOUTH FORBES PARK
Vacant Lot 1500 sqm.
Tels: 818-2781 /751-5472
Cell:0919-6745430

QUEZON CITY

Exclusive Res'l Lot nr Ateneo/UP/Miriam 204m^2@P8.5th 09189235216

KATIPUNAN EXT 3648m^2 P9.5T/m^2 Commercial Maid Rd Ideal for gas station/School Convenience Store near UP Ateneo Call 0918-9235216

KATIPUNAN EXT COM'L beside future Kenny Rogers 1,100m^2 & 451m^2@P9.5th/m^2 454-5667 / 0918-9235216

LOYOLA GRAND VILLAS choice lots w/ view, Sweden Street available 426-5650, 929-1832 • 0919-6212235

PROVINCIAL

★100% TAGAYTAY ★
240m^2-up 3,568m^2 134T D/P 6 Mos to pay 6T Mo. nr Taal Vista 6609372

RIZAL

Beverly Hills Lot 842-5621

LAGUNA

3has Calamba Lot 842-5621

VARIED AREAS

QUEZON CITY PROPERTY
corner lot with Building locate at Quezon Ave.
(1903 sqm)
E. Rodriguez Property
in-front of Quezon Institute
(1,109.8 sqm)
INDANG CAVITE PROPERTY
Indang Property right beside Indang British School
Pls. call 374-6007
8am-5pm

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

HOUSE

PARANAQUE

MARIMAR 3BR 2TB Grg nr SM Blc Wtr Ok 823-2885

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

CONDO/TWNHSE

MAKATI

MAKATI CONDO/OFC RENT/SALE 09189392979

MANILA

ERMITA or MAKATI Rent/Sale Resdl/Coml/Office Term nego (Flor) 0917-851-1193

PARANAQUE

WESTMONT-SUCAT 1BR & PRKG 09272107234

APARTMENT

MANILA

1BR,2BR nr P.GIL 5891978 5634007

QUEZON CITY

1BR/PK NICE SAFE 4576195

KANLAON 2BR 7315908

ROOM & BOARD

BF P'QUE P200! 8275345

Chin Hospital Mla 7118679

•FURNISH PASAY 8872865•

LADIES SN JUAN 4161045

BUSINESS RENTAL

AUTO / MECHANIC DRIVER 8993562 / 8961098

AYALA AVE 8181696/7586

PTAMO nr BUENDIA 1st class 62/129/148/185m^2 8903461 loc. 34 or 18 ofc hrs

RESORT LEASE/RENT

Pansol Hot Spring priv 7767507

LOAN & MORTGAGE

BUSINES DOCTOR 524-3197

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE OR RENT

COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL

260m^2 w/5 Offices 5487 Boyle St, Palanan Mktl • 804-0067

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

HONDA

00 CRV A/T P595 09184238154

00Accord.vtl alt 550t 4267915

02Civic VTI 565K M/T 4361294

02Civic VTI 585K A/T 4361294

NISSAN

01 Exalta DS m/t 365T 4267915

2001 Model Nissan Frontier P600T Neg. w/Carry Boy Slightly Used 0919-8707359 • 0919-3552515

TOYOTA

95FX DUAL AIRCON 5K GAS P170K 0918-3382948

VOLVO

98 VOLVO S70
A/T 450T Rush Sale
0917-5363184

VAN/PICK-UP

2001 Strada, fully loaded, TV, 12cd changer, camper shell w /AC and Japanese Seat, bull bar, others. 780T Call 0920-9003033

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

OTHER CAR BRANDS

Pajero Prado Surf Trooper Terrano Town-Lite Hi-Ace Space gear Ell Canter etc Finance Trade In Tel 9120647

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

CARS FOR RENT

Sunflower Transport Hi-Ace Coaster 631-3496, 0919-3220871

CarsVans CoasterBus 422-9296

CARS/VANS/BRIDAL 8969956

Cheap Van Rental 9330311

L300 • Urvan • Starex • MB100 • Vios • Altis 7268388

STAREX'05 MB100 9483535

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LAKBAY 951-9481

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Q.C.: 426-2278 • 426-4084

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1.5% CARLOAN 788-0361

1.5% Easy Car Loan 3748765

1.5% Easy Carloan 7815352/55

1.5% w/oTaking Car 7228942-43

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3650974/75

1.5% w/oTaking Car 7228942-43

•1HR Fast Car Loan 7125202•

2% w/o Taking Car 7262780

2% w/o taking car 7880183-84

2% w/oTaking Car 8966630/33

2% w/oTaking Car 8870490/95

2% w/oTaking Car 3732081/82

2% w/oTaking Car 7221021

2% w/oTaking Car 8959454

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

BILLIARDS

26T New Compl Sr Impld 7767507

CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL

PLYBOARD 18mm P680-
PLYWOOD marine 5mm P320-
Tel. 813-1841; 813-1555

PETS

Dog Trainer 0919-2050952

WANTED TO BUY

"PROFESSIONAL & CREDIBLE"
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DBP Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines will receive sealed bids on February 28, 2005, 2:00 p.m., Auditorium of the DBP Head Office, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City for the following properties on CASH BASIS:

CODE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	MINIMUM BID
REAL ESTATE			
MANILA			
CWB-001	M.V. delos Santos St., (Near Univ. of Manila) Sampaloc	443.10 m^2 residential/ commercial lot (TCT No. T-264424) with 4-storey dormitory bldg.	P26,533,700.00
AM-CP-023a *AM-CP-023b* *AM-CP-023c*	Andora St., cor. Jackson St., Vista Verde North Subd., Caloocan City	Residential lots with bldg. & imp.: 276 m^2 TCT No. C-348039 190 m^2 TCT No. C-348031 190 m^2 TCT No. C-348033	 P 727,260.00 P 468,350.00 P 468,350.00
BATAAN			
AM-CP-024	Sta. Monica Homes, Sitio Wiswis Camaya, Mariveles	2 adjoining vacant residential lots (TCT Nos. 229478 & 229479) total area of 100 m^2	P 251,300.00
BATANGAS			
AM-CP-025	Lot 11, Blk. 3 Transville Homes Subd., Banay-Banay, Lipa City	60 m^2 residential lot (TCT No. T-141654) with bldg. & imp.	P 331,500.00
BULACAN			
AM-CP-026	Brgy. Santol, Balagtas, Bulacan	2 adjoining vacant agro-industrial lots (TCT Nos. 421182 M & 421183 M) total area of 31,400 m^2	P15,063,000.00
CAVITE			
DSM-001	De Fuego, General Trias	3,614.50 m^2 residential-industrial lot (TCT No. T-1025488) with hospital bldg. imp.	P61,581,200.00
LAGUNA			
AM-CP-027	Lot 20 Blk. 5, Villa Consolacion, Brgy. San Vicente, San Pedro	79 m^2 residential lot (TCT No. T-536560) with bldg. & imp.	P 360,600.00
AM-CP-028	Lot 26 Blk. 5, San Carlos Village, Brgy. Banay-Banay, Cabuyao	50 m^2 residential lot (TCT No. T-536563) with bldg. & imp.	P 225,100.00
AM-CP-029	Lot 11 Blk 11, St. Joseph Village, Phase 6, Butong, Cabuyao	40 m^2 residential lot (TCT No. T-584456) with bldg. & imp.	P 200,000.00 P 201,800.00
RIZAL			
AM-JA-030	C. Lawis Ext., Brgy. San Luis, Antipolo	1,377 m^2 industrial-residential lot (TCT No. R-14327) with factory-office bldg. & imp.	P10,014,700.00
CHATTELS (sale on per item/set and "as-is, where-is" basis)			
CWB-29	Bldg. 693 Gridley St., SRF Compound, Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Olongapo City	Various machinery and equipment for food processing (1-Fully Automatic Convection Conveyor Oven, 1-Automatic Turbo Dryer Convection Blower, 4-Universal Food Cooker, 2-Universal Mixing/ Seasoning Machines, 2-High Pressure Boilers, 1-Vacuum Sealing/Packaging Machine, 1-Meat Rolling Machine, 1-Walk-in Freezer, 1-Canning Seaming Machine, 1-Meat Slicer Machine, 4-Automatic Sealing Machines, 10-Basins Fabricated, 4-Active Stacking Tripods-High Grade, 6-Active Stacking Tripods, 10-Manual Sealing Machines)	P 7,700.00 to P 4,820,000.00

BIDDERS ARE REMINDED:

1. To inspect the properties to determine their actual condition before the bidding;
2. To submit in DBP's official bid form available at the AMD-Acquired Assets, 2nd Floor, DBP Head Office during office hours; and
3. To be on time. No bids will be accepted once unsealing of the bids commences. The sale shall be subject to other terms and conditions which may be imposed by the Bank.

DBP RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE BANK. THE DECISION OF THE BANK IS FINAL AND BINDING.

For inquiries, please call telephone numbers: 892-1566/893-7172 or 818-9511 local 2218/2252 for Code starting with AM; 926-8216 and 920-4909 for Code starting with CWB and (046) 416-1390 or 818-9511 local 1427 for Code starting with DSM.

ASSET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

(PDI – February 16 & 17, 2005)

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

WANTED TO BUY

WE BUY AT HIGH PRICE
ROLEX
5646593 5897041
5633742 0917-8473744

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late JESUS S.F. GONZAGA, Sr. was extrajudicially settled among his heirs as per Doc. No. 10; Page No. 99; Book No. 2; Series of 2005 of Notary Public Dante S. David of Quezon City
(PDI-Feb.10, 17, & 24, 2005)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late LUMEN MILAD settled by their heirs through an extrajudicial portion acknowledged before Notary Public Delfin Agcaoili of Quezon City as per Doc No. 2437; Page No. 18; Book No. CXV; Series of 2004.
(PDI Feb. 10, 17 & 24, 2005)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late AURORA GUIANG CONCEPCION settled by their heirs through an extrajudicial portion acknowledged before Notary Public Corleto Castro of Pampanga as per Doc No. 2437; Page No. 18; Book No. CXV; Series of 2004.
(PDI Feb. 10, 17 & 24, 2005)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE ESTATE OF THE LATE TIMOTEO V. FORONDA WAS EXTRAJUDICIALLY SETTLED AMONG HIS HEIR AS PER DOC. NO. 81; PAGE NO. 12; BOOK NO. LXXII; SERIES OF 2005 UNDER NOTARY PUBLIC ATTY. ERNESTO L. MENDOZA. (PDI FEB 17,24 & MAR. 3, 2005)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE

WANTED Rush Truck Drivers High Sal. w/exp prof lic.no.2,3,8 Call 873-5271•872-0265•

FEMALE

ACCOUNTING CLERK (2) knowledge & experience in bookkeeping & basic Acctng procedures computer literate 9314046 / 9510180 Angela

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BOARD OF INVESTMENTS

dti

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the application of SKY LIMIT APPAREL MFG., INC with office address at 172 C. Raymundo Avenue, Maybunga, Pasig City for registration with the Board of Investments under Book I of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, otherwise known as E.O. 226, as Amended, as a Expanding Export Producer of Garments at a capacity of 15,000 dozens per year with project site at same office address stated above has been officially accepted on February 8, 2005 and is currently being processed.

Any person with valid objections to or pertinent comments on the above mentioned application may file his/her objection, in writing under oath, with the BOI within one (1) week from the date of this publication.

Issued this 8th day of February 2005.

(Sgd.) RUDY B. CAÑA
Officer-in-Charge
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI - Feb 17, 2005)

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

30 Ofc Stf/HRD 3617687 Ayan

BSP•BSN•PT•MT
Any Allied Health Grads up to P45T/ Mo! 8922818

CAREGIVER T4043528

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

Dom.helper, dressmaker, all around beautician 5224435 0920-6262141

SALES MKTG STF 09178451373

Wanted: Lic Med-Tech 746-1537

REBAP CEP Seminar

The Real Estate Brokers Association of the Philippines, Inc. (REBAP) will sponsor a Continuing Education Program Seminar (CEP) for Real Estate Brokers Renewal of Licenses on February 26 & 27, 2005 from 9:00AM to 6:00PM at 2/F CREBA Bldg., South A St., corner A. Roces Avenue, Quezon City. For more details please contact Vicky or Lenie at 373-2280 or 374-2496.

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AUCTION

www.henrybutcher.com

SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION

At.: Henry Butcher Auction Center - Hilon Cmpd., Bo. Mayapa, Canlubang, Laguna
ON: TUESDAY 22ND FEBRUARY 2005 - 10:30AM SHARP

MOTOR VEHICLES; GENERATING SETS; POWER TOOLS/HAND TOOLS; OFFICE FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT; ELECTRICALS; WOODWORK MACHINERY; MISCELLANEOUS, ETC.

MOTOR VEHICLES - FORD F150 Pick-Up (2000), (3) F150 (1999); FORD RANGER (2000); TOYOTA 2000 Model Hi-Ace Van; MITSUBISHI Owner Type Jeep; BOMBARDIER Rotax Powered Jet Ski
GENERATING SETS - DENYO 45 & 25 kva Quiet Type Generator; SHIN KOBE 7.8 kva Air cooled Diesel Generator; SHIN KOBE 6 kva Air Cooled Diesel Generator
POWER TOOLS / HAND TOOLS - MAKINA Steel Cut-Off Machines; MAKINA Routers; MAKITA Drill & Grinder Sets; BLACK & DECKER Electric Drills; HITACHI Disc Grinders; BALDWIN Pipe Threaders; Bolt Cutters; SATO Combination Wrench Sets; Socket Wrench Sets; Vice Grips; Plier Sets; Bar Bending Machine; Pedestal Drills; Hydraulic Pipe Benders; Hydraulic Body Frame Repair Kits; Automatic Tire Changer
OFFICE FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT - LUXUS Swivel Chairs; Guest Chairs; Wooden Office Tables; 4-Drawer Steel Filing Cabinets; Lateral Filing Cabinets; Mobile Pedestal Drawers; Steel Lockers; Safety Vaults; Asstd. Wooden Cabinets; Pentium 4 & 3 Computer Sets; Printers; Steel Rackings
WOODWORK MACHINERY - 12-Spindle Drive Bottom Boring; G-Spindle Drilling Machine; Angle Saw Cutter; 2-Shaft Drive Saw; Glue Roller Machine; Single-Blade Plywood Saw; Circular Saw
ELECTRICALS - GE 2000/1600 Amps Main Distribution Panels w/ Branches; MITSUBISHI WF-800 Circuit Breakers; Contactors; Asstd. Transformers; Welding Wires; High Tension Insulators; Fluorescent Lamps; Communication Cables;
MISCELLANEOUS - Digital Computing Weighing Scales; Portable Stoves; Gas Rangers; TEW Hand Driers; Cue Balls; Door Knobs; GI Fittings; Industrial Blowers; Security Camera Housing; Air Compressors; 3-Door Chillers; Satellite Disc; AHIBA Turbo Color Scientific Instrument; 2" Gate Valves; NIKON COOLPIX 950 Digital Camera; TIMEX 1440 Digital Sport Watch Chrono; SONY Playstation

On View: Monday 21st February 2005 - 9am to 5pm & morning of sale day
Refundable Deposit: Php20,000 (upon registration)
Please bring valid ID to be presented during registration

For further information please contact Carol Cosca at Tel: 049 834 6541
Email: carol.cosca@henrybutcher.com

GoIndustry Henry Butcher

HENRY BUTCHER INTERNATIONAL PHILIPPINES INC
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E-mail manila@henrybutcher.com
Website www.henrybutcher.com/www.goindustry.com

MACTAN CEBU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY
LAPU-LAPU CITY
PHILIPPINES

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. The Mactan-Cebu International Airport Authority (MCIAA) through its Bids and Award Committee (BAC) is inviting interested parties to apply for eligibility and to submit Sealed Bids for the supply of Ninety Five (95) Aviation Related Security Guards.
2. To be registered, interested bidders must submit the following eligibility documents (In case of photocopied documents, the original must be presented):
   a. DTI/SEC Registration Certificate, whichever appropriate under the law
   b. Mayor's Permit, Municipal License
   c. Taxpayer's Identification Number/BIR Registration Certificate
   d. Security License
   e. Audited Financial Statement for the last 2 calendar years stamped received by BIR or its duly accredited & authorized institution
   f. GEPS Registration
3. Deadline for submission of Letter of Intent with Eligibility Documents will be on March 2, 2005. Distribution of Bid Documents will be **March 11 to 14, 2005** at the BAC's Office from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P6,000.00

Pre-Bid Conference	March 22, 2005 at 9:00 A.M.
Bid Opening	March 31, 2005 at 10:00 A.M. (closing 9:45 A.M.)

4. For more information, please contact the BAC Secretariat at telephone number 3402486 local 2050/2051
5. The BAC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defect of informality, assume no obligations whatsoever of indemnity to the bidders any expense of loss that it may incur in the preparation of its bid, and to accept the bid most advantageous to the Government.

(Sgd) VERONICA S. ORDOÑEZ
BAC Chairman

(PDI - Feb 17 & 24, 2005)

AUCTION

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SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION

At.: 1321 Apolinario St., Bangkal, Makati, Philippines
On: Saturday 19th February 2005 - 10:30am

ELECTRONIC/ELECTRICAL; PUMPS; MOTORS; STORAGE SYSTEMS; OFFICE FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT, MISCELLANEOUS ETC.

In over 700 lots including: -

ELECTRONIC/ELECTRICAL - INTERMEC Barcode Printers; COGNEX Vision System Camera Controllers; PANASONIC Inverter; MITSUBISHI Programmable Controllers; SIMCO Aerostat Air Ionizers; Asstd. Power Supply Boxes; Transformers, etc.
PUMPS/MOTORS - BALDOR, G.E. MAGNETEC, TOSHIBA, PANASONIC, ELECTROCRAFT, VEXTA, EMENSON, ORIENTAL Induction Motors; HYDRACELL Pump, etc.
STORAGE SYSTEMS - STANLEY VIDMAR Steel Accessory Drawers; Tool Boxes; Steel Collapsible Rackings; Steel PCB Racks; Unused Carton Boxes; Tote Boxes; Moisture Barrier Bags, etc.
OFFICE FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT - Executive Swivel Chairs; Chemical Chairs; Wooden Desks; Computer Tables; Wooden Cabinets; Lateral Filing Cabinets; Pedestal Drawers; LAN Racks; Conference Tables; Modular Partitions; Steel Lockers, etc.
MISCELLANEOUS - 3M, DAEWON Jedec Matrix Trays; ADVANTEK Cover Tapes; Carrier Tapes; Stainless Pizza Trays; Fire Control Gears; Stainless Mobile Tray Carriers; Anti-Static Chip Tubes; Telephone Handsets; Labeling Tapes; Bond Papers; Aluminum PCB, Magazines; Caster Wheels

On View. Fri. 18th February 2005 - 9:00am to 5:00pm & morning of sale day
Refundable Deposit: Php10,000 (upon registration)
Please bring valid ID to be presented during registration

PLEASE NOTE: NO SLIPPERS/SANDALS, NO SLEEVELESS SHIRTS, NO SHORTS, NO SMOKING, NO VIDEO/CAMERA, NO CHILDREN - WILL BE ALLOWED ON THE AUCTION PREMISES
PLEASE CONTACT THE AUCTIONEERS OFFICE FOR MORE DETAILS

For further information please contact May Almudin at Tel: 852 2910 loc. 100
Email: may.almudin@henrybutcher.com

GoIndustry Henry Butcher

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E-mail manila@henrybutcher.com
Website: www.henrybutcher.com/www.goindustry.com

Republic of the Philippines
Office of the President
Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council
HOUSING AND LAND USE REGULATORY BOARD

Board of Commissioners
Board Resolution No. 775
Series of 2004

APPROVING THE DELETION OF ITEM 4 OF BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 725, SERIES OF 2002, ENTITLED "AMENDING THE REVISED IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 957 (PD 957) AND BATAS PAMBANSA BLG. 220 (BP 220)"

WHEREAS, the Board in compliance with Presidential Decree 953 entitled, "Requiring the Planting of Trees in Certain Places and Penalizing Unauthorized Cutting, Destruction, Damaging and Injuring of Certain Trees, Plants and Vegetation," has issued Board Res. No. 532, S of 1993;

WHEREAS, item 4 of Board Resolution No. 725, S. of 2002 provides "that the planting of trees in areas designated as planting strip be deleted";

WHEREAS, of late there is a growing concern and a public clamor for the greening of urban areas which includes residential subdivisions and other real property developments;

WHEREFORE, it is hereby **RESOLVED** that item 4 of Board Res. No. 725, S. of 2002 be **DELETED** as the same is hereby **DELETED**.

APPROVED, this 06th day of December 2004, Quezon City.

The Honorable NOLI L. DE CASTRO
Vice President of the Philippines and HUDCC Chairman

RAMON J. LIWAG
Undersecretary, DOJ
Ex-Officio Commissioner

ROMULO Q. FABUL
Chief Executive Officer
and Commissioner

EDUARDO R. SOLIMAN, JR.
Undersecretary, DILG

TERESITA A. DESIERTO
Commissioner

AUGUSTO B. SANTOS
Deputy Director General, NEDA
Ex-Officio Commissioner

FRANCISCO L. DAGNALAN
Commissioner

JOEL L. JACOB
DPWH
Ex-Officio Commissioner

JESUS YAP PANG
Commissioner

Attested by:

CHARITO B. LANSANG
Board Secretary

(PDI-Feb. 17, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region VII, Cebu City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Food Authority, Region VII, Cebu City is inviting all interested licensed operators of vessels/barges whether owned through Bareboat/Time/Voyage Charter to apply for eligibility and to bid under the Letter of Agreement for Vessel/Barge Hire for the remaining balance of 2005 rice shipment from Cebu City to various destinations as indicated below:

VOLUME SCHEDULED FOR SEA DISPERSAL

DESTINATION		No. of Lots	Maximum Quantity/Lot (bags)	Freight Rate/bag	Approved Budget for the Contract per Lot
Province	Port				
Camotes Is.	Poro	4	17,500	16.70	292,250.00
Bohol	Ubay	3	4,000	17.40	69,600.00
S. Leyte	Baybay	1	15,000	21.50	322,500.00
W. Samar	Calbayog	2	40,000	24.40	976,000.00
	Catbalogan	2	24,000	24.40	585,600.00
E. Samar	Borongan	2	45,000	32.50	1,462,500.00

Summary of Bidding Procedures:

The bidding shall be governed by RA 9184. A Single Stage, Two Envelope System of evaluation will be adopted. Envelope A shall contain the eligibility requirements as specified in the Instruction to Bidders which will be evaluated in a non-discretionary "Pass" or "Fail" criteria. Only those who complied with all the requirements shall be declared "Eligible" and shall proceed to the next phase which is the opening of Envelope B. Envelope B shall contain the accomplished and signed Bid Form.

Bids will be ranked from lowest to highest on a per lot basis to determine the Lowest Calculated Bid. The bidder with the lowest calculated bid shall undergo post qualification by the Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC) to verify, validate and ascertain statements made and documents submitted in the eligibility requirements. After which, the bidder shall be declared "Lowest Calculated Responsive Bid" and shall be recommended for awarding of contract.

Schedule of Activities:

Activity	Date	Time
Issuance of Bidding Documents	Feb. 10/05 - Feb. 21/05	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Pre-Bidding Conference	February 22, 2005	10:00 AM
Submission & Opening of Bids	March 09, 2005	10:00 AM

Interested bidders may secure the bidding documents from the RBAC Secretariat, 2nd Flr., NFA, Region VII, Cebu City after payment of a non-transferable, non-refundable application fee of P5,000.00. Bidders or their authorized representatives are required to be present during the opening of sealed bids. For further inquiries, you may call the undersigned in any of the following numbers: (032) 232-1939; (032) 232-6832.

The NFA reserves the right to reject any or all bid proposals, to waive any informality or defect found therein, and may accept bids which are deemed most advantageous to the Agency.

(Sgd.) PIOLITO C. SANTOS
Assistant Regional Director /
RBAC Chairman

(PDI - February 10 & 17, 2005)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
TENTH JUDICIAL REGION
BRANCH 23
CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY

Land Reg. Case No. N-2003-03
LRA Record No. N-75863

NOTICE OF INITIAL HEARING

To the Hon. Solicitor General, Office of the Solicitor General, 134 Amorsolo St., Legaspi Village, Makati City, the Director, Land Management Bureau, Escolta, Manila, the Regional Executive Director, Region X, DENR, Cagayan de Oro City, the Hon. Secretary, Department of Public Works and Highways, Bonifacio Drive, Port Area, Manila; the Hon. Secretary, Department of Agrarian Reform, PTA Bldg., Elliptical Road, Diliman, the Director, Forest Management Bureau, Visayas Avenue, Diliman, both in Quezon City, Metro Manila, the Provincial Governor, the Provincial Prosecutor, the General Services Officer, the Provincial Engineer, the Public Works and Highways District Engineer, the CENR Officer, CENRO, Land Management Sector, the City Mayor, the City Council, the City Prosecutor, the City Treasurer, the City Engineer, all in Cagayan de Oro City; Road, c/o the City Mayor/Engineer, Sevenia Poquita, Rustico Pacamo and Ma. Cecilia Catajoy, all in Carmen, Cagayan de Oro City; **AND TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

An application having been filed in the above entitled case by **MANUEL SY**, married to Mely Sia, Initao Misamis Oriental thru Cabanlas and Resma Law Offices, No. 101 E. Corrales Ave., Cagayan de Oro City, by Atty. Antonio V. Resma, praying for the registration and confirmation of the title to the following described land.

A parcel of land (Lot 42517, Csd-10-006113-D, being a portion of lot 18469, Cad-237, Cagayan Cadastre) situated in the Brgy. of Carmen, City of Cagayan de Oro, Province of Misamis Oriental, Island of Mindanao. Bounded on the N., along line 1-2 by Lot 149-P, Csd-8006 (Existing Road), on the SE., along lines 2-5 by Lot 149-M, Csd-8005, on the S., along line 5-6 by Lot 149-K, Csd-8006 and on the NW., along line 6-1 by Lot 18469-A, Csd-10-006113-D. Beginning at a point marked "1" on plan, being S. 86 deg. 37' W., 129.04 m. from BLLM No. 3, Cad. 237, Cagayan Cadastre

thence N. 88 deg. 43' E.,	13.04 m. to point 2;
thence S. 06 deg. 00' W.,	20.25 m. to point 3;
thence N. 88 deg. 51' W.,	4.45 m. to point 4;
thence S. 03 deg. 10' W.,	5.24 m. to point 5;
thence S. 88 deg. 08' W.,	8.41 m. to point 6;
thence N. 05 deg. 08' E.,	25.36 m. to the point of

beginning, containing an area of **THREE HUNDRED ONE (301) SQUARE METERS** more or less. All points referred to are indicated on the plan and marked on the ground on corners 3-4-5 by old points and the rest are PS. Bearings true, date of original survey, Nov. 1926 – July 1932 and that of the subdivision survey on February 26, 1989, executed by Engr. Romualdo S. Lagsa and was provided on March 8, 1990.

Note: Lot 18469-B, Csd-10-006113-D = Lot 42517, Cad. 237, Cagayan Cadastre.

You are hereby served this notice to appear before this Court at its session to be held at Regional Trial Court, Branch 23, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines, on the 21st day of March, 2005 at 8:30 o'clock in the morning, then and there to present such claim as you may have to said land or any portion thereof, and to submit evidence in support of such claim and unless you appear at said Court at the time and place aforesaid, your default will be recorded and the title to the land will be adjudicated and determined in accordance with law and the evidence before the Court and thereafter you will forever be barred from contesting said application (or petition) or any decree entered thereon.

Witness: the HON. MA. ANITA ESGUERRA LUCAGBO, Presiding Judge of said Court, the 24th day of September, 2004

Issued at Quezon City, Philippines, this 17th day of December, 2004.

ATTEST:

(Sgd.) BENEDICTO B. ULEP
Administrator
Land Registration Authority

By:

(Sgd.) SALVADOR L. ORIEL
Chief, Docket Division

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY

(Sgd.) GLORIETTA T. LACAMBRA
Chief, Publication of Notices Section
(PDI – February 17, 2005)

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TEL. NO.: 912-9008 TO 11
Contact Persons: Aileen, Pat, Adel & Iris

SM MEGAMALL BLDG. A
INQUIRER
EDSA

MANDALUYONG BRANCH

SM MEGAMALL
5TH LEVEL, BLDG. B, EDSA
TEL. NO.: 635-0219 / 637-2008
Contact Persons: Joy, Arnold, Randy & Arnel

Cebu-Leyte Power Project gets P600-M Syndicated Term Loan

THE DEVELOPMENT Bank of the Philippines (DBP) and Banco De Oro (BDO) signed last Feb.9 a P600-million syndicated term loan agreement with the National Power Corporation (NPC), National Transmission Corporation (TRANSCO), and the Power Sector Assets & Liabilities Management (Psalm) Corporation to partially finance the Leyte-Cebu Interconnection Uprating Project (LCIUP), a major power project programmed to sustain the reliability and stability of electricity supply in the Cebu-Negros-Panay (CNP) grids.

The LCIUP will be implemented under the Visayas Transmission Augmentation Program (Project VISTA), a multi-billion peso venture consisting of major interconnection projects that is envisioned to provide medium and long-term solutions to the looming power crisis in the Visayas. The LCIUP is expected to increase the transfer capacity of the existing interconnection from 200 MW to 400 MW. The project also promotes the use of clean energy and averts the possible use of fossil-fueled power generators to augment power supply in the region by tapping geothermal power from Tongonan, Leyte.

The syndicated term loan is covered by a guarantee agreement with the Department of Finance, which was signed on the same occasion. Shown in photo during the signing ceremony held at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas are seated (seated, from left): BDO vice chair Jesus A. Jacinto, Jr.; BDO president Nestor Tan; DBP president and CEO Reynaldo David; Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong; NPC president and CEO Rogelio Murga; TRANSCO president and CEO Alan Ortiz; and BDO senior vice president Ador Abrogena.

UPRATING PROJECT
(LCIUP)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
CITY OF ILIGAN
OFFICE OF THE BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) of the City Government of Iligan through the Office of the Iligan City Water Works System (ICWS) invites interested contractors classified by and registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and to Bid for the following projects.

NAME OF THE PROJECT	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (Million)	PCAB LICENSE CATEGORY CLASSIFICATION
Project A - Construction of 650,000 gals, R.C. Reservoir, Site Development Access Road, Installation of Piping, Valving System and Distribution Pipelines in Barangay Luinab	37.138	Category B/ Medium A in Water Supply
Project B - Improvement of Water Supply in part of Brgy. Tubod and Tipanoy	9.93	Category C & D Small B in Water Supply

Interested contractors must submit Letter of Intent (LOI) and eligibility requirements provided for in R.A. 9184 on or before March 3, 2005 at 5:00 p.m. at the BAC Secretariat c/o City General Services Office (CGSO) City Hall, Iligan City.

Bid Documents will be available to eligible contractors for issuance starting February 25 to March 26, 2005, 5:00 p.m. at BAC Office City Hall, Iligan City upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P2,000.00 each project.

A pre-bid conference will be held on April 6, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. at the BAC Office Cityhall, Iligan City.

The submission and opening of technical and financial proposals will be on April 18, 2005, 10:00 a.m. at Casemiro Cabigon Hall, City Hall, Palao, Iligan City.

The City Government reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any minor defects therein and accept the offer of the most advantageous to the government.

For more details, please contact BAC Secretariat Tel. Nos. (063) 221-4340, 221-4341 or Iligan City Water Works Office Tel. Nos. 221-4810, 223-7703.

(Sgd.) FRANKLIN D. MAATA
Chairman
Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI-February 17 & 24, 2005)

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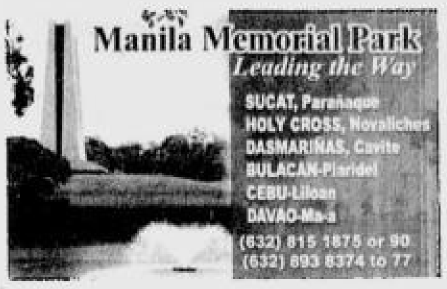
OBITUARIES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HOLY CROSS, Novaliches
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(632) 893 8374 to 77

The Chairman,
The Members of the Board of Trustees,
and The Officers and Employees
of

Dr. V. Orestes Romualdez
Educational Foundation, Inc.

deeply condole with the family of

DR. ROQUE D. YUTANGCO

President

who passed away on February 15, 2005.
His remains lie in state at the RTRMF Medical
School, Calanipawan, Tacloban City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, February 23, 2005
at the Leyte Metropolitan Memorial Park,
Tacloban City.

The Chairman,
The Members of the Board of Trustees,
and The Officers and Employees
of

Doña Remedios Trinidad Romualdez
Medical Foundation, Inc.

deeply condole with the family of

DR. ROQUE D. YUTANGCO

President

who passed away on February 15, 2005.
His remains lie in state at the RTRMF Medical
School, Calanipawan, Tacloban City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, February 23, 2005
at the Leyte Metropolitan Memorial Park, Tacloban City.

DR. ROQUE DY YUTANGCO, M.D.

Peacefully joined our Creator
on February 15, 2005 at the age of 79.

His loving wife, **Dr. Purita Abellera Yutangco**; children **Arleen & Farro**; **Ronnie & Mita**; **Lulu & Boyen**; and **Dennis & Mylyn**; grandchildren **Nathan, Monika, Itos, Iñigo, Inno, Iko, Maryjo, Joel, John,** and **Ysabel**, sisters, in-laws, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Remedios Trinidad Romualdez Medical Foundation, Calanipawan Road, Tacloban City, Leyte.

Interment will be on Wednesday, February 23, 2005 at the Leyte Memorial Park after the 8:00 a.m. Mass.

In lieu of flowers, the family will appreciate monetary donations for the Dr. Roque D. Yutangco Scholarship Fund thru Dr. Jess Reyes or Mrs. Lynn de Veyra at the RTR office with tel. nos., 053-3275355 or 053-327-5004.

"We miss you, We love you, We'll never forget you"

Our Dearly Beloved

Ret GEN ANTERO "TERO" L. JAVIER

(GSC) PNP

On his First Death Anniversary
February 17, 2005

His loving wife, **ANGELINA P. CASTRO**; children **AGERICO LUIS** and **VILLACERES**, **ARTHUR ZENON** and **IRMA**, **MARIA ANGELINA AURELIA** and **ERWIN KIT**, **ANGELINA MENA III** and **PETER RYERSON**, **ALEXANDER THOMAS**, **ALFONSO FRANCISCO** and **VIANCA**; grandchildren **ALLYZA CHARMAINE**, **ALLEXI CATHREENA**, **ANDREI CHRISTIAN**, **MARGARET MARY**, **ANNE VICTORIA** and **PATRICIA ANGELA**. Relatives and friends request to join us in prayer for the eternal repose of his soul.

Holy Masses will be offered at the following churches:

St. Joseph Chapel, Camp Crame, Quezon City	6:00 a.m.
St. Ferdinand Cathedral, Lucena City	6:00 a.m.
St. Joseph of Mount Carmel, Lucena City	6:00 a.m.
St. Claire Monastery, Sariaya Quezon	6:00 a.m.
San Pedro Bautista Parish, Candelaria Quezon	6:00 a.m.
San Juan Nepomuceno Parish, San Juan Batangas	6:00 a.m.
Holy Spirit Parish, DRBF^2 Homes, Quezon City	6:00 a.m.
St. Peter Parish, Commonwealth Quezon City	6:00 a.m.
Our Lady of Manaoag Church, Pangasinan	6:00 a.m.

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

CARMELITA BAUTISTA PACHECO

of Malabon City and Quezon City
who joined her Creator on February 7, 2005
wish to convey our sincerest and heartfelt gratitude to all those who offered masses and prayers, sent flowers and notes of sympathy, extended support, visited and kept vigil, attended the services and funeral rites, and those who in countless ways condoled, helped and comforted us in the hours of our deepest sorrow.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 14:6

We lovingly remember on
his 25th Death Anniversary

DR. PEREGRIN P. DE GUZMAN, SR.

April 27, 1911 – February 19, 1980

Founder, NE Good Samaritan Gen. Hospital
Good Samaritan Colleges
Cabanatuan City

Masses are/will be offered at the following:

St. Nicholas Cathedral Cabanatuan City	February 11 – 19 (5:30 pm)
Dambana ng Ina ng Laging Saklolo Cabanatuan City	February 11 – 19 (5:30 pm)
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Monastery Cabanatuan City	February 13 (4:30 pm) & February 14 – 19 (6:00 am)
Good Samaritan Hospital & Colleges Cabanatuan City	February 19 (8:00 am)
Christ the King, Greenmeadows Quezon City	February 19 (6:00 am & 7:00 am)
Sanctuario de San Antonio FP Makati	February 19 (6:15 am)

His children, sisters, relatives and the Good Samaritan Family request prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
Matthew 10:39

CARMELITA TAVERNA CRUZ

September 14, 1934 – February 15, 2005
(Formerly of Crispa Floro)

Peacefully joined her Creator
on February 15, 2005.

Her remains lie in state at Chapel 4, Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

Cremation will be held on Friday, February 18, 2005 after the 4:00 p.m. Mass.

Her family requests the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

JOCELYN ORLINA AFUANG

of Guinobatan, Albay and Angono, Rizal
June 10, 1944 - February 14, 2005

Her bereaved husband **Johnny**, children **Ma. Jazminne** and **Arnel**, **Jonathan** and **Kim**, mother **Estelita**, sister **Norma**, brothers **Jerry** and **Tessie**, **Nony** and **Nida**, other relatives and friends request the pious reader to pray for her eternal happiness in heaven.

Her remains lie in state at the St. Martin mortuary of the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City.

Masses are held every evening and will be held on Friday 7 a.m., February 18, after which according to her wishes she will be cremated at the Chinese Cemetery Crematorium.

"Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, My servant also will be." **John 12:16**

FLAVIA PEÑAFLOR MACAM

Retired Teacher of Torres High School of the City of Manila

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on February 16, 2005 at the age of 86.

Her bereaved family: sons **TEDDY**, **HENRY** and **DENG**; daughter **EMY**; son-in-law **RAUL**; daughters-in-law **SUSAN**, **BING** and **MEMETTE**; grandchildren **LORIE**, **JOJO**, **RHEA**, **KITS**, **STEF**, **DENISE**, **MARTIN**, **ME-ANNE**, **FRANCIS** and **MARC**; and other relatives and friends request for you prayers for the repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Capilla San Aemiliani, Arlington East, The Garden Chapels, 1354 C. Raymundo Ave., cor Mercedes Ave., San Miguel, Pasig City.

Interment will be at The Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, after the 8A.M. Mass at Arlington East on February 20, 2005.

NO visas required at this Embassy /D1

LIFESTYLE

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
Text us your feedback:
Inquirer life name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

Yes, you are so LUCKY to be SINGLE!
Ship sails on May 15, 2005! So join now!
You can even win the trip for free if you register and reserve within January 10 to March 10, 2005!
Log on to www.itsamatch.com

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ● TUESDAY **FITNESS** ● WEDNESDAY **2BU** ● THURSDAY **FOOD**

Grab 'em while you can

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

GOOD news! Remember those Japanese Nama Chocolates I wrote about a month or so ago, my favorite fresh chocolate, then available only in Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore? Well, they are now available in the Philippines as well. The Diamond Hotel brought them in for Valentine. I hoarded my supply and I suggest you do, too, as supplies are limited.

You can get them at the Tea Lounge of the Manila Diamond Hotel. Flavors are Champagne, Au Lait, Grand Marnier, White, Bitter and Remy Martin. (Wilma Advincula, 5283000 ext. 1118 and 1123)

Old friends, new things

I celebrated the Chinese New Year at the Mandarin Hotel. I bumped into a lot of old, comforting faces, Tita Julie Yap Daza and Donnie Ramirez to name a few, people who believed in me, took me under their wings and watched over me as I was starting my career.

As the dragon danced the night away and the first lucky meal for the year was served, I went around the *tiangge* set up in the parking lot and found the most interesting Pinoy creation. The Joy Stove (Raul and Carol Mendiola, 4542040/0919-3775294/ 0917-4674798/0920-8173236) is smokeless and odorless. The best part is it is charcoal-powered, with each coal feeding lasting up to three hours.

I'd jump up and down for joy if any contraption saved me a few bucks on electricity. So, as the name implies, it is a great and economical invention, especially for those who love to cook *sinigang na baboy, nilaga* or practically anything that requires a few hours of cooking.

It is great for picnics and out of town trips, too, because, aside from being a stove, it is also a mini barbecue pit. It has, believe it or not, an "air controller" to adjust the heat.

What better way to start the New Year than to be among old friends, discovering new things, while eating and toasting the night away? I have Charisse Chuidian to thank for the lovely evening. No one does Kung Hei Fat Choi like you do, Charisse!

Angus Beef promo

Another thing that might interest you... My good friend and colleague, chef Jessie Sinsioco of Le Soufflé, is doing a month-long Certified Angus Beef Promotion at her Rockwell outlet. I haven't had the chance to go there but, knowing this woman as one of the most reliable names in the field, this promo is bound to be an astounding success.

Good luck to you, Jess, and see you at Le Soufflé real soon!

Authentic Gambas

My husband just had a stroke and I am now thinking of starting a small eatery. I asked my friends what they like me to add to my menu and *gambas* is always the one they ask for.

I know how to cook gambas but mine does not taste good—shrimps are always hard.

L.V.

I am so sorry to hear that. All will be well in God's time. Keep the faith! For you: my best *gambas* recipe, with the wish that it somehow puts a smile on your face! Be happy!

Authentic Gambas al Ajillo

¾ c peeled garlic cloves, thinly sliced

½ c good quality oil, preferably extra virgin olive oil

Salt

2 tsp tomato paste

1 dry chili, chili flakes or chili powder to taste

3 tbsp flat-leaf parsley

½ k shrimps, peeled and de-veined

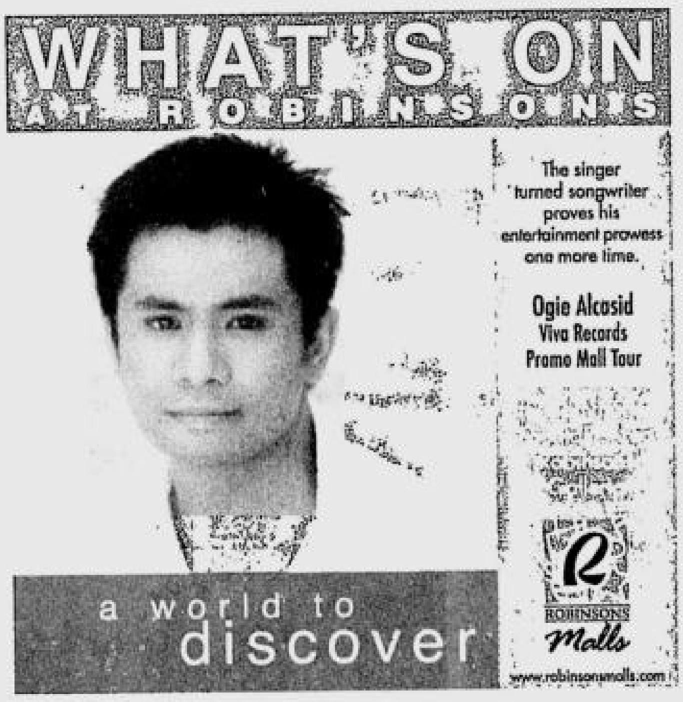
Heat olive oil. Add garlic and cook until almost golden. Add the rest of the ingredients, shrimps last. The secret to success is to cook the shrimps only until they change color to keep them soft.

Garnish with parsley and lemon. Serve im-

GRAB/ C3

A Valentine treat available for a limited time at Diamond Hotel is my favorite Japanese Nama Chocolate

SINFULLY Delicious Royce Nama Chocolate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The singer turned songwriter proves his entertainment prowess one more time.

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HENY SISON
CULINARY SCHOOL

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

March 1 (Tuesday) 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m (classroom A) New Class! **VEGETARIAN & FISH DISHES by: Jackqueline Haessig Alleje**, owner of Rizal Dairy Farm, Swiss-Pinoy restaurateur (Vieux Chalet Swiss restaurant), organic caterer and food consultant (Petra's naturally green, global, gourmet)
* Tuna Tartare, Tomato Soup with Tofu Croutons, Mango Passion Salad, Fish Fillet in White Wine Sauce, Vegetable Casserole & Lemon Mousse. **P2,000**

March 2 (Wednesday) 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) **DIMSUM I by: Chef Katherine Sion, restaurateur (Ding Hao & Fat Kat restaurant)**, caterer and an expert in Chinese cuisine. * Congee, Siomai, Dumpling, Chicken Feet, Fried Shrimp Ball and Buchi **P1,500**

March 3 (Thursday) 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m (classroom B) **PIZZA CLASS WORKSHOP by: Chef Giorgio Bucciarelli**, Master Pizzaiolo & Barista, food consultant of various Italian restaurants all over Metro Manila, graduated at Culinary Institute, Milan, Italy * In this class you will learn the history, concept and design of pizza making. Learn how to make pizza dough, tomato base sauce, white sauce base, preparation, set up pizza counter, know the ingredients and toppings. Recipes: Margherita, Napoli Classica, 4 Formaggi, Pizza Vegetariana, La Gibiana, Piccantina, 4 Stagioni, Calzone & Frutti di Mare. Demonstration with student participation. **P2,500**

March 4 (Friday) 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) **COFFEE CLASS by: Chef Aileen Anastacio-Sandoval**, owner of Goodies N' Sweet Bakeshop & C'est Si Bon, Dean's list graduate of Culinary at the California Culinary Academy * If you are planning to open a coffee shop this course is for you. Learn the four fundamentals of coffee brewing, home espresso, guide to steaming & foaming. Make fun toppings & garnishes & master the art of coffee making. **Recipes:** Caffé Latte, Caffé Mocha, Caffé Americano, Cappuccino, Espresso Macchiato & Espresso Con Panna, Almond Coffee Freeze, Icy Rum Coffee Cream, Toffee Coffee, Mudslide Malt, Mocha Rumba, Rocky Road and more! . **P3,000**

March 5 (Saturday) 10:00a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) New Class! **PHILIPPINE SWEETS & DELICACIES: BULACAN (Part 1) by: Chef Carol Acosta**, food consultant to multinational food companies & restaurants. * Ensaymada Malolos with Red Egg & Kesong Puti, Inangit sa Kawali, Pichi-Pichi Pandan, Special Inipit, Puto Puto (Steamed Puto) and Puto Bumbong. **P1,500**

March 5 (Saturday) 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom B) **SECRETS NO MORE! by: Heny Sison** * Decadent Chocolate Cake with Fudge Icing & Caramel Sauce, Lemon Torte, Ensaymada, Almond Sansrival, Strawberry Shortcake & Ube Cake. **P3,000**

March 7 (Monday) 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (classroom A) **SOUTH BEACH DIET PHASE I by: Jacqueline Haessig Alleje** * This class will guide you through the theory and the recipe of Phase I – the strictest phase of the diet and how to prepare them in your home. All participants will be weighed on the onset of the program. Inclusive of complete menu plan recipes and cooking demo. **P2,800**

March 8 (Tuesday) 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (classroom A) **COMMERCIAL BREAD BAKING WORKSHOP by: Chef Jill Sandique**, Food Consultant & Food Stylist, Blue Ribbon graduate at Peter Kumps New York Cooking School. * Spanish Bread, Pandesal, Hotdog Bun, Pan de Coco, Choco Bread Hamburger Bun, Meat Roll & Pig Pie plus bonus recipes! **P2,500**

March 9 (Wednesday) 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (classroom A) **COMMERCIAL BREAD BAKING WORKSHOP II by: Chef Jill Sandique** * Egg Pan de Sal, Foccacia, Pullman Loaf, Multigrain Bread, Dinner Rolls, Rye Bread, Brioche & Two kinds of Cinnamon Rolls. **P2,500**

March 10 (Thursday) 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m (classroom A) **FRESH PASTA WORKSHOP by: Chef Giorgio Bucciarelli** * Learn how to make pasta egg dough, green spinach dough, black pasta dough, different kinds of pastas: lasagna, green lasagna, ravioli, tortellini, cannelloni, fettuccine: green & black, stuffings for ravioli, tortellini and cannelloni. Sauces for lasagna, tortellini, ravioli & cannelloni. Recipes: Lasagna alla Bolognese, Lasagna ai 4 Formaggi, Lasagna al Pesto, Cannelloni alla Ricotta and Spinaci, Ravioli alla Boscaiola al Burro e Salvia, Tortelini ai 4 Formaggi, alla Panna Proscutto e Funghi, Green Fettuccine alla Montanara, Black Fettuccine ai Frutti di Mare. **Demonstration with student participation. P2,500**

March 11 (Friday) 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m (classroom A) New Class! **NUTS ABOUT DESSERTS by: Jackie Ang Po**, pastry Chef of Fleur de Lys Patisserie, dean's list graduate, California Culinary Academy * Honey Pistachio Baklava, Chocolate Macadamia Brittle, Gooey Pecan Pie, Cashew Boat Tarts with Meringue Topping, Almond Crunch Cookies, and Mini Peach Walnut Sansrival. **P1,500**

March 12 (Saturday) 1:30 – 5:30 p.m. (classroom A) **BASIC RESTAURANT SERVICE SKILLS by: Cecile Mauricio**, former editor of Mabuhay Philippines (Philippine Airlines' in-flight magazine), is a communication and marketing consultant for various restaurants. * Restaurant staff who can communicate well is the key to improved sales and service. A concise workshop for new waiters and waitresses, new restaurant owners, or a refresher course for regular staff. Course outline: Communication Skills, Personality Development, Customer Service, Sales & Marketing Concepts and Service Strategies. **P1,200**

March 12 (Saturday) 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m (classroom B) **KOREAN COOKING I: A WORKSHOP by: Chef Cecile Park**, owner of Sila Korean Restaurant & food consultant to various Korean restaurants in Metro Manila. * Beef Bulgogi (Tenderloin & ordinary), Chicken Bulgogi, Pork Bulgogi, Chap Chae, Mi Yuk Guk (Soups: Seaweed, Beef or Tahong), Bibimbap & Kalbi Jim. **P2,500**

March 16 (Wednesday) 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. (classroom A) **PASTA GALORE by: Chef Aileen Anastacio-Sandoval** * Learn all-time favorites pasta dishes. Recipes: Pasta Puttanesca, Pasta Carbonara, Spaghetti with Meatballs Seafood Pasta with Tomato Cream and Vongole. **P1,700**

March 16 (Wednesday) 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m (classroom B) New Class! **CHINESE VEGETARIAN MEALS by: Chef Katherine Sion** * A collection of simple vegetarian dishes that can be served in parties or in your home. The course will also teach you the techniques in cooking vegetables using different flavors you can choose from. * Fried Beancurd, Lo Honchay, Sauteed Vege w/ Mixed Vegetables, Steamed Beancurd Roll, Beansprout w/ Kutchay Flower, Braised Beancurd w/ Vege Duck Meat & Assorted Mushrooms, Snow Fungus w/ Fruit Cocktail, Sauteed Spicy Baguio Beans w/ Spicy Sauce. **P1,700**

March 17 (Thursday) 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) **BASIC FLOWER ARRANGEMENT by: Glenn Remorca**, floral designer * Learn the theories, styles, trends, techniques, sourcing, flower care & maintenance, basic form, arrangements and flower for wedding. Lecture, demonstration and hands-on production. Bring a pair of scissors. **P2,500**

March 18 (Friday) 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (classroom A) **JAPANESE COOKING II by: Chef Koichi Kondo**, licensed cook from Ehime, Japan and food consultant to various Japanese restaurants. * Clam Soup, Miso Soup w/ Pork and Vegetables, Soup w/ Rice Cakes, Beef Salad, As-You-Like-It Pancake and Rolled Omelette. **P1,700**

March 19 (Saturday) 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (classroom A) **COOKIE BARS FOR SELLING by: Chef Jane Paredes**, Food Consultant, trained at the Culinary Institute of America Hyde Park, New York and Peter Kump's New York Cooking School. * Chocolate Revel Bars, Fudge Brownies, Pecan Bars, Oatmeal Raisin Bars and Lemon Bars. **P1,500**

March 19 (Saturday) 1:30 – 5:00 p.m. (classroom A) **DELI SANDWICHES & SALADS by: Chef Jane Paredes** * This class will teach you how to prepare & package deli-style sandwiches & salads for take out counter & food to go. **Recipes:** Assorted Cold Cuts, Chicken Pastrami, Tuna-Apple, Grilled Eggplant & Cheese, Crabstick Salad, Homemade Potato Salad, Aioli Dip with Potato Chips, Fresh Fruit Compote and Garden Green Salad. **P1,700**

March 19 (Saturday) 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom B) **PARADE OF PIES, TARTS & CHEESECAKES by: Heny Sison** * French Apple Pie with Streusel Topping and Crème Anglaise Sauce, Turtle Pie, Banana Cream Pie with Whipped Cream and Caramel Topping, Mango Tart, Peach Walnut Pie, Blueberry Cheesecake and White Chocolate Cheesecake. **P1,700**

March 21 - 22 (Monday & Tuesday) 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) **CAKE DECORATING COURSE I by: Heny Sison** * Learn the basics of cake decorating: icing, color, star, shell, dots, outline and scallop borders; the rose, figure piping: clowns & booties. Each student will bake & decorate a character birthday cake. Full participation. **P4,000**

March 21 (Monday) 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom B) **New Class! HEAT & EAT: (How to Make Pies for Kiosk & Canteen?) by: Chef Jane Paredes**
*Flavors: Russian Roulette, Taj Majal, Laksa, Southern Guy, Nutty Chook, Morning Glory, Sweetie Pie, & Pop Pie. **P 2,000**

March 22 (Tuesday) 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom B) **PHILIPPINE SWEETS & DELICACIES: BICOL by: Carol Acosta** * Masapan de pili, Masapan Bars, Kasuy Tarts, Tamales & Maruya. **P 1,500**

March 28 - 29 (Monday & Tuesday) 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) **CAKE DECORATING 2 by: Heny Sison** Add amazing new skills to your cake decorating – the world of icing flowers, distinctive borders, flower sprays & specialty flowers. As a final project you will decorate a basketweave cake filled w/ cascading flowers. **Full participation. P4,000**

March 28 (Monday) 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom B) **New Class! PHILIPPINE SWEETS & DELICACIES: QUEZON/LAGUNA by: Carol Acosta**
* Kalamay Hatu (Panocha), Espasol w/ Pinipig and Young Coconut, Cheesy Tikoy, Pastillas Macapuno, Ube Langka, Buko Pie, Sinukmani / Bibingka Malagkit. **P 1,500**

March 29 (Tuesday) 10:00 a.m – 4:00 p.m. (classroom B) **BROWNIE WORKSHOP by: Chef Jill Sandique** * Fudgy Brownies, Chocolate Chip Butter Blondies, Chocolate Chip Walnut Bars, Cappuccino Brownies, Butterscotch Brownies, marbled Cream Cheese Brownies, Fruit & Nut Bars and White Chocolate Brownies. **P2,500**

March 30 (Wednesday) 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) **FAVORITE CHINESE FASTFOOD DISHES by: Chef Katherine Sion** * sweet & Sour Pork, Pinsec Frito, Steamed Chicken w/ Mushroom & Rice, Beef Curry Rice, Beef Pares, Lechon Macau, Sauteed Vegetables w/ Oyster Sauce and Sauteed Kangkong w/ Bagoong Sauce .**P2,500**

March 30 (Wednesday) 10:00 a.m. 4:00 p.m. (classroom B) **New Class! COOKIE WORKSHOP by: Chef Jill Sandique** * Chocolate Chip Cookies, Food for the Gods, Angel's Sigh, Greek Almond Crescent, Mocha Streusel Squares, Cinnamon Sugar Cookies, Caramel Pecan Bars and Chocolate Chip Almond Biscotti. **P2,500**

March 31 (Thursday) 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (classroom A) **PIE WORKSHOP by: Chef Jill Sandique**, Food Consultant & Food Stylist, Blue Ribbon graduate of Peter Kump's New York Cooking School * Turtle Pie, Banana Cream Pie, Kentucky Derby Pie, Lemon Meringue Tart, Mud Pie, Boston Cream Pie, Chicken Pot Pie and Chocolate Walnut Pie. **P2,500**

HENY SISON AT JULIUS MAGGI KITCHEN
Nestle Bldg. #13 Plaza Drive, Rockwell Center, Makati City

March 4 (Friday) 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. **BASIC CAKES & ICINGS FOR BEGINNERS** * Butter Cake with Butter Icing, Moist Chocolate Cake with Fudge Icing, Mocha Cake with No-Melt Butter Icing, Lemon Chiffon Cake with Boiled Icing & Sponge Cake with Whipped Cream Icing. **P1,500**

March 7 (Monday) 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. **BROWNIES & BARS** * Chewy Moist Brownies, Carrot Cake Bars with Cream Cheese Icing, Lemon Cheesecake Bars, Brownies with Caramel Centers and Butterscotch Bars. **P1,500**

We are now accepting enrollees for the May batch of Essential Cooking Series and Essential Baking & Pastries!

The Essential Cooking Series (May 3 - June 16, 2005)
Classes are held every Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays

Essential Baking & Pastry Series (May 6 - July 30, 2005)
Classes are held every Fridays & Saturdays

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Great bowls of pasta

DINING OUT

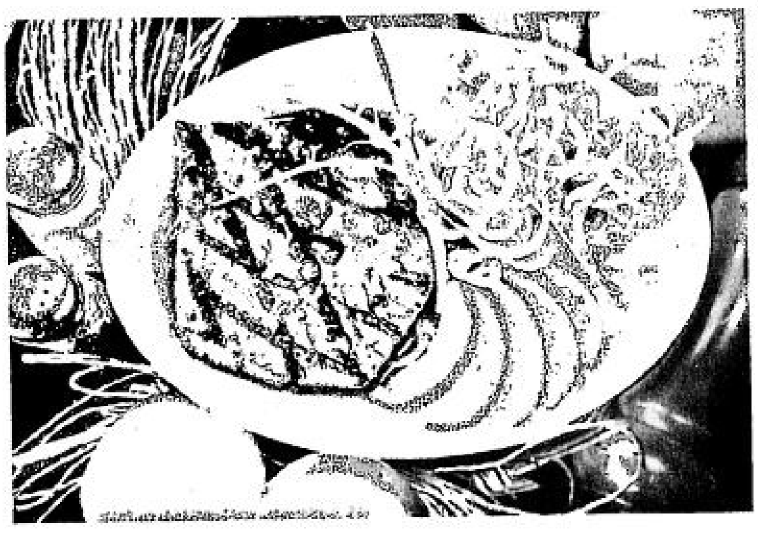
ITALIANNI'S introduces Great Bowls of Pasta—the new Red Pesto Salmon, Shrimp Primavera, 3-Meat Ravioli and Fusilli Piemonte—at Glorietta IV, SM City Bicutan and Alabang Town Center. Wine and dine at Italianni's Libis, Greenhills and Greenbelt. Choose a featured wine from the Sea Ridge Coastal Winery to go with your pasta. Italianni's recently opened two new branches in Quezon City–at Unit 1,CKB Center, Scout Rallos corner Tomas Morato and the Gateway Mall in Araneta Center.

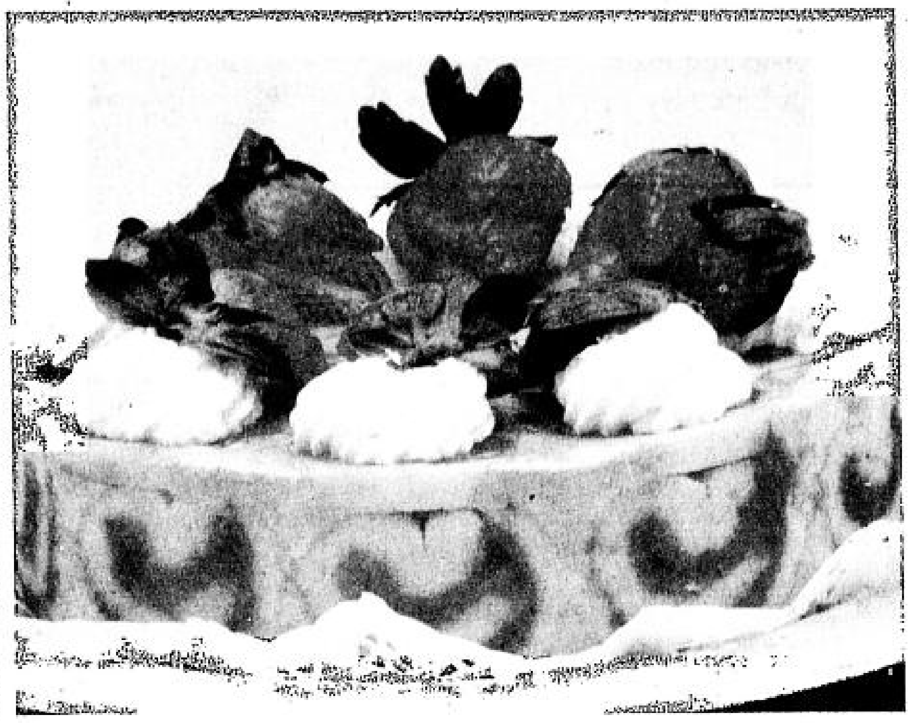
UCC Coffee has new garden-fresh salads. The Beef Ga-Rikku Sarada and Kani Mango Sarada have been added to the menu that already includes Grilled Vegetable Teppanyaki and Japanese Seafood Salad. Cap your meal with siphon-method prepared coffee or freshly brewed tea. UCC Coffee shops are on Tomas Morato, Quezon City; Connecticut St., Greenhills; the Podium, Ortigas Center; Forbes Town Center, Taguig City; and Paseo Center, Makati City. Soon to open is the UCC Coffee Westgate Center in Alabang.

FLAMERS Burgers and Chicken at Greenbelt 1 introduces its latest hamburger creation for the year–The Pizza Burger, a pizza and burger in one. The pizza bun is topped with homemade pizza sauce, fat-free cheddar cheese, mushroom, garlic, onions, bell pepper, shredded cheddar cheese and Flamers' special seasoned cucumbers. The half-pound burger patty made from lean grass-fed cattle of Australia and New Zealand is topped with two strips of crispy bacon and a choice of garnish. The lean burger is charbroiled over hot volcanic rocks– rare, medium well, or well done according to your preference. Flamers is at the G/F, Greenbelt 1, Ayala Center, Makati City. Call 7507619 or dial 459-FOOD for hi-tech delivery service.

ARISTOCRAT Restaurant offers "Lover's Mousse." For P650 minimum dine-order, guests can get two Aristocrat Bakeshop's Chocolate Mousse cups for free. This offer is good until Feb. 28. Aristocrat branches are located at Robinsons Place Manila and Jupiter St., Makati City. Call 5233923 or 8950101.

THE BELLEVUE Hotel's Lobby Lounge offers Strawberry Sensation cake. Call 7718181.





HOLIDAY Inn Galleria Manila's featured dessert this month is Strawberry Mousse Fantasy. Bring home this special cake for only P95 per slice and P750 whole. Available at the Raphael Café and Restaurant. Call 6337111 loc. 7416.

TEQUILA Joe's offers 12 new dishes, including Crispy Shrimp Salad, Barbecue Ranch Pork Salad, Pancho Villa's Pillows, two new sandwiches (Cajun Chicken and Fish Fillet) and eight sizzling grill items. TJ is at Alabang Town Center (8504729/9513) and on Tomas Morato (3745011/5012).

TASTEMAKERS

Shakey's
SHAKEY'S

HITTING A HOMERUN
Shakey's supports sports development in children through the International Little League Association of Manila (ILLAM). Shown with the Shakey's Team are Suzy, Captain Shakey's and the Pizza Man. Shakey's continues to give great food, great value, and great service because "Nothing Shakes like Shakey's." For delivery, just dial 5338000.

PIZZA HUT'S FIRST IN BOHOL.
Pizza Hut opened recently its flagship store in Tagbilaran City. Vice Mayor Nuevas Montes (right) welcomed the new arrival to their city. Pizza Hut BQ Mall is the chain's 122nd branch. It is located at the G/F of BQ Mall on CP Garcia Ave. Others in photo are BQ Mall owner, Frederick Ong; Pizza Hut restaurant general manager Lani Dumadag; Bb. Pilipinas International 2004, Margaret Ann Bayot; and Bb. Pilipinas Universe 2004, Maricar Balagtas.

Cooking classes for children

VICKY Veloso-Barrera is now accepting students for her Tiny Kitchen children's summer cooking classes to be conducted at her Quezon City home.

The Tiny Kitchen Basic course is for kids aged seven and up. A full menu is taught at each class: main dish, side dish, drink and dessert.

Recipes are safe, easy and fun to do. They are especially developed by Barrera for kids and have been the most popular with her students over the years. A five-session Tiny Kitchen Advance course is students who have completed the basic.

Those who have completed both basic and advance programs, can choose between the five-session Tiny Kitchen Expert course (that include chocolate candy-making, breakfast items, pasta sauces and more) or Tiny Kitchen Around the World that will give kids an appreciation of the food of other countries.

Choose one day a week (2-4 p.m., Monday, Wednesday and Friday; 9-11 a.m., Tuesday and Thursday) for five consecutive weeks beginning March 28 until Apr. 25.

Another class will be conducted on May 2-30.

Fee for each five-session course is P5,000, inclusive of all ingredients. Children take home what they cook. Each class will have only seven students.

Barrera has also written two cookbooks, "Tiny Kitchen" and "Not so Tiny Kitchen" (Books for Pleasure, Inc.) available at all branches of National Bookstore and Power Books.

Call 4102279 or 0916-5165035. Enrollment forms are also available at Malu Veloso Bridal Boutique, 3/F Shangri-La Edsa Mall, tel. 6315054, and at the shop of Letlet Veloso in Forbes Park.

KIDS get to do something fun and educational at Tiny Kitchen.

Credit card holders get free treats

CITIBANK cardholders can expect free treats when they use their Citibank credit card to pay for meals at select establishments.

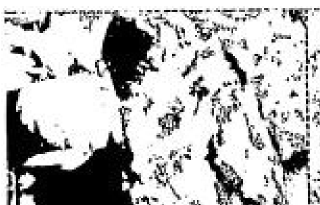
At Teriyaki Boy, Citibank cardholders get free ebi sushi and iced tea for a minimum purchase of P350, free kani salad and iced tea for a minimum purchase of P500, a choice of tori karage or kakiage tempura and iced tea for a minimum purchase of P1,000 and a free tofu steak and iced tea for a minimum purchase of P1,500.

The promotion is available at Teriyaki Boy outlets in Madison Square Greenhills, Tomas Morato, Glorietta 3, Festival Mall Alabang, SM City Baguio, SM Megamall Megastrip B, Market! Martket! ground level, and at the Greenhills promenade. To avail of the offers, just present coupons printed in Citibank's latest newsletter sent by mail to cardholders, or print coupons from Citibank Online at www.citibank.com.ph.

Exclusive treats are also in store for Citibank Clear MasterCard and Visa cardholders at choice establishments. Get a free dessert for a minimum purchase of P800 (lunch or dinner) at Temple Bar and Restaurant at Greenbelt 2, a 10-percent discount on food and drinks at Red Box Karaoke in Greenbelt 3, or a free dessert for a minimum P500 purchase at Pho Hoa outlets in SM City Manila and North EDSA, SM Megamall B, Alabang Town Center, Greenbelt 1, Wilson Street, Eastwood City, Tomas Morato, and Metro Walk, and Meralco Avenue.

The promo, ongoing until Feb. 28, is open to primary and supplementary Citibank cardholders of good credit standing. Holders of Citibank Cash Back card, the latest innovation from the country's leading credit card issuer, will also get a 3 percent bonus cash rebate on top of regular cash rebates, by using the card for dining expenses until June 30.

Call the 24-hour CitiPhone at 9959999 or log on to www.citibank.com.ph.



TORI KARAGE or KAKIAGE TEMPURA and one single-serve ICED TEA for a minimum purchase of P1,000

FREE TOFU STEAK and one single-serve ICED TEA for a minimum purchase of P1,500

Middle Eastern, Australian beef cooking

THE REGGIE Aspiras School of Culinary Arts is conducting the following classes:

Feb. 18, Friday, Middle eastern Food 101—Falafel and Yogurt Dip with Pita; Beef Tagine with Couscous; Lamb and Merguez Stew with Basmati; Shish Kebabs; Fish in Vine Leaves; dessert

Feb. 19, Saturday, Do-It-Yourself Mongolian Barbecue 101 (easy, great for entertaining)—Learn to prepare Mongolian Barbeque with everything on it: condiments and excellent sauces, cooked on the spot

Feb. 21, Monday, Prime Beef (all new)—Australian cattle, fattened and aged in the Philippines: cheap and delicious steak cuts–ways of preparing Strip Loin, Rib-eye, T-bone, and New York Steak; grilling techniques; rubs; sauces; side dishes–over 12 recipes

Feb. 23, Wednesday, Entertaining with friends (all new)—Baked Cheese with Crab Filling; Cold Cantaloupe Soup with Prosciutto Crisps; Garlic Pot Roast with Pilaf; Roast Duck with Apricot Sauce; Profiteroles with Truffle Sauce

Call 9289296, 9273008, 6335162, or 0917-8399888.

Dimsum and desserts classes

LEARN the techniques in preparing assorted Chinese Dimsum in the Maya Kitchen cooking class, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Feb. 19.

To be taught are Pork Siomai, Shrimp Siomai (Hakaw), Chicken Feet, Chicken Wings, Pork Spareribs and, as bonus, Fried Tofu. At 1:30-5 p.m. on the same day will be "Gulaman Delights." Learn how to prepare Cathedral Window, Coffee Jelly, Almond Jelly, Flavored Panacota, Buko Pandan.

On Feb. 26, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., the class will be on "Sarap Pinoy Cooking". Covered are Sisig, Batchoy, Bagnet, Crispy Pata, Bicol Express and Kilawin, among others. At 1:30-5 p.m., it will be "Cakeshop Specialties" including Caramel Crunch, White Forest Cake, Chocolate Custard, Crema de Fruta, Tiramisu and Sacher Torte.

Make beautiful cakes through "Cake Decorating (Basic)," 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Feb. 19 and 26.

At 2-5:30 p.m., Feb. 22-25, the "Baking II" session will cover baking ingredients and their functions, baker's percentage/math, commercial methods used in preparing breads, pies, cakes, pastries, bakery products, including costing and batching applicable to bakery operation.

Visit the Maya Kitchen (Tuesday-Saturday) at 8/F, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Avenue (formerly Pasay Road), Makati City, or call 8921185 or 8925011 local 108. E-mail mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph.

NUTTY Choco Loco

New sweet treat

WHAT are Funnel Cakes. Are they cakes shaped like funnels? Are they cakes made with crushed funnel seeds? But there are no funnel seeds, only fennel seeds. Could they be cakes and pastries served in funnels?

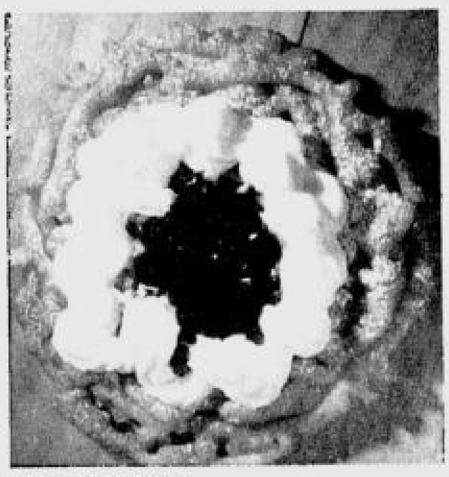
"Actually, we use a funnel pitcher in making the cakes," explains Gina See, the enterprising young woman who added another delicious reason for Filipinos to indulge their sweet tooth.

"Imagine freshly mixed batter made from eggs, milk, sugar and flour poured in a pitcher with a funnel-shaped mouth. You take the pitcher and pour batter in boiling oil, gradually swirling the batter in outward circular motion or criss-crossing back and forth till you make an 8-inch round cake. Fry it till it's golden brown.

"While it's piping hot, you then pour powdered sugar or maple syrup, serve and watch how it disappears before your eyes as your family devours this crispy sweet treat," says Gina See.

See has concocted various toppings for the cake—Cinnamon Sugar, Caramel Almonds, Nutty Chocoloco and Peanut Butter Banana, Blueberry Whip and Strawberry.

Funnel cakes are Pennsylvania Dutch specialties usually sold in amusement parks and county fairs in the US. They were called fried dough cake, and the original recipe often used bumper produce like milk, cream and butter.



BLUEBERRY Whip

You need not to travel all the way to Knots Berry Farm, Disneyland or Six Flags Magic Mountain to get your fair share of funnel cakes. See's Funnel Cake Factory is located at the Fort Strip, Global City.

The outlet fries the funnel cakes right before your eyes from Monday to Saturday 11 a.m.-10 p.m. and Sundays from 10 a.m.-9 p.m. This March, buy four funnel cakes and get one free.

Passengers' rights have to be protected

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

A PASSENGERS' bill of rights is what authors of the consumers protection act evidently forgot. Ask anyone who uses public transport and you'll hear an earful of gripes about rundown vehicles, trip-cutting, shortchanging or overcharging, abusive and/or incompetent drivers, filth, not to mention hold-up men and pickpockets.

But suffering passengers of public land transport can at least get off the vehicle anytime and get on another bus, jeep or cab. Not so to the unfortunate airline passengers who have very little choice but to grin and bear their woes. They are among the most abused consumers, and we're not just talking here about rampant flight delays and cancellations, or loss of luggage.

> People who travel by air are among the most abused consumers, and not just because of flight delays, cancellations, or loss of luggage

Here are some complaints sent by readers: no information on cause of delay, passengers of cancelled or delayed flights are left to fend for themselves, luggage pilferage, inadequate compensation—or none at all—for lost luggage, etc.

Last weekend, Shirley Sanders, landscaper and author of many landscaping books, had a different complaint—misleading advertisement of Philippine Airlines announcing "Lucky Fares" promo fares for the Year of the Rooster. Sanders recalled her experience:

"I was in Legazpi when I saw the newspaper ad of Philippine Airlines announcing its Lucky Fare for the Year of the Rooster. It offered a promo fare of P888 for a one-way ticket from Manila to various destinations, and vice-versa.

"Right away, I sent the driver to the Legazpi PAL counter to buy a round-trip promo ticket for Manila-Tacloban-Manila. The local representative, however, rejected the P1,777 payment which I had computed on the basis of the promo rate. I had to pay P1,488 for a one-way ticket instead of the P888 advertised rate."

Sanders, a frequent flier with privilege passenger status as premier elite, complained to PAL president and chief operating officer, Jaime J. Bautista, and pointed out that there was deception in the advertisement.

We saw the particular advertisement (not in INQUIRER) and, indeed, there was no indication that the promo applied only to basic airfare and that passengers should shoulder taxes and other airport fees. What we noted was the announcement that the promo fares were valid from Jan. 10 to Mar. 15; and that the seats were limited to early bookings.

In his written reply to the complaint of Sanders, Bautista explained, "...there are taxes, fees and other charges that are applicable to all types of fares and which were previously approved by CAB (Civil Aviation Board) even before the effectivity of the Lucky Fares (promo)."

Bautista apologized to Sanders and further wrote, "We will be implementing appropriate measures to avoid further misinterpretations of the advertised airfares."

More complaints on SLEX

Many of us in the media forget our good manners and right conduct in our desire to be at the forefront of a happening. Here's how a motorist felt when he and his wife were caught recently in a traffic jam resulting from a fatal shootout.

Cecilio Chan wrote: "Oblivious of the long traffic (holdup) they have caused from Southwoods exit to way past Alabang, several members of the media and big OB vans and generators of ABS-CBN and GMA hogged a lane even after the shootout was over. Only one lane could be used by motorists.

"When this happens at 7:30 a.m., rush hour, thousands of passengers and motorists get late for work, not to mention the waste of time and fuel."

E-mail author at mariettagiron@hotmail.com.

Grab 'em while you can

From page C1

mediately.

Another tip: Though not in the original recipe, a teaspoon of Knorr seasoning works wonders, too!

Cheese sticks

Can you give me a recipe for cheese sticks, like Friday's.

CORA, UPLB

Don't really know if this recipe is like Friday's but I'm sure it's equally delicious. If it isn't the same, let's just call it Tuesday's Cheese Sticks!

30 pcs of mozarella sticks

3 c breadcrumbs, ground to a fine powder or 2 c breadcrumbs, ground to a fine powder and 1 c parmigiano, grated to a fine powder. Combine in a bowl.

4 eggs

Dip mozarella in egg and coat with crumbs. Freeze for at least an hour. Deep-fry in hot oil. Serve with sauce.

Sauce:

¼ c olive oil

2 tbsp chopped garlic

¼ c onions, finely chopped

¼ c celery, finely chopped

¼ c carrots, finely chopped

1 small can whole tomatoes, seeded, chopped, juice reserved (I use Cirio, S&W or Molinera)

½ c of chicken stock

salt

black pepper, plus more to taste

1 tsp mixed Italian herbs

sugar to taste, optional

Tabasco to taste, optional

Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce to taste, optional

Heat olive oil in a saucepan. Add garlic, onions, celery and carrots and saute until vegetables are slightly soft.

Add the rest of the ingredients and simmer over low heat for 20-30 minutes.

Season to taste with salt, pepper, sugar, Tabasco, Worcestershire Sauce.

Sorry, ran out of space for the Spanish culinary terms. Will continue next week!

For comments or suggestions, text 0917-8399888.

JOY Charcoal Stove

GOOD FOOD, GREAT MOBILES AT SM FOODCOURT

More than 250 cellphones will be given away at SM Foodcourt every two weeks during its Good Food, Great Mobiles raffle promo. For every P100 food purchase inclusive of medium size or 16oz Nestea or Nestea Lite, the customer gets a chance to win his choice of cellphone.

Two (2) Panasonic A100, four (4) Nokia 1100, (4) Nokia 3315 and (4) Motorola C201 will be given away every draw in each branch. Raffle draws will be on January 31, February 14, February 28 and March 14 at SM Foodcourt Manila, North Edsa, Sta. Mesa, Fairview, Cubao, Megamall, Makati, Sucat, Bicutan, Southmall, Pampanga, Bacoor, Cebu, Iloilo, Davao, Lucena, Baguio, Marilao, Dasmarinas and Batangas.

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The CGP2005 National Finalists

UNILEVER FOODSOLUTIONS DREAM TEAM CHALLENGE

Luzon.
School: Univ. of Regina Carmeli * E. Tawagon (Adv) * R. Carlos, M. Cruz, A. Dionisio
Visayas:
School: St. Therese-MTC Coll. * R. Dela Mar (Adv) * N. Umadhay, C. Calopez, A. Segumalian
Mindanao:
School: Phil. Women's College * J. Maniego (Adv) * J. Tan, M. Bedrejo, M. Pecision
NCR (Manila):
School: OB Montessori * I. Espina (Adv) * A. Yu, J. Tesoro, C. Ng

KNORR NEW ASIA CUISINE COMPETITION

Luzon:
School: University of Regina Carmeli * E. Tawagon (Adv) * J. Vasquez
Visayas:
School: St. Theresa - MTC Colleges * C. Cabalu (Adv) * M. Llovil
Mindanao:
School: Golden-State College * C. Cutamora (Adv) * B. Bayoy, Jr.
NCR (Manila):
School: OB Montessori Center * E. Bermudez (Adv) * M. Imperial

LIPTON MOCKTAIL MIXING COMPETITION

Luzon:
School: Lyceum of Batangas * R. Bicol (Adv) * D. Papasin
Visayas:
School: University of St. La Salle * J. Panaguiton (Adv) * N. Demapanag
Mindanao:
School: Lourdes College * R. Dael (Adv) * J. Jamero
NCR (Manila):
School: St. Scholastica's College, Manila * A. Tuble (Adv) * B. Belita

The CGP2005 Special Awards

The Caltex LPG "Sulit sa Gamit" Award for the Unilever Foodsolutions Dream Team Challenge Contestants with the highest score in food preparation, hygiene and sanitation will receive an all expense-paid trip for four to Boracay.

The International School for Culinary Arts and Hotel Management (ISCAHM) Dream Team Award for Culinary Presentation for the Unilever Foodsolutions Dream Team Challenge Contestants with the highest score in portioning, plated presentation and menu integration will receive the short course ISCAHM scholarship for the team and their adviser with a combined worth of eighty thousand pesos.

The NMI Foodservice Creativity Award for the Unilever Foodsolutions Dream Team Challenge Contestants with the highest score in the Wartering Portion of the Competition will receive ten thousand worth of foodservice equipment for their school.

The KLG-Vollrath Knorr New Asia Award for the Knorr New Asia Cuisine Contestant who will post the highest score in technical preparation, portioning and presentation will receive ten thousand worth of foodservice equipment for his coach, twenty thousand worth of foodservice equipment for his school and ten thousand worth of foodservice equipment for himself.

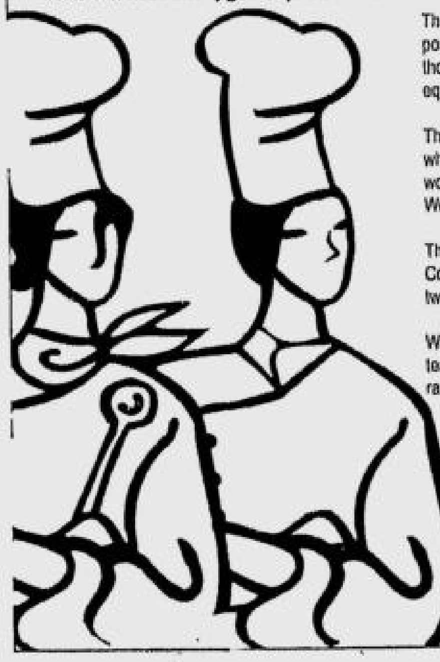
The F&B World Magazine Creative Fusion Award for the Knorr New Asia Cuisine Contestant who will post the highest score in menu innovation and creativity will receive fifteen thousand worth of premium culinary books for his school library plus a one year subscription of F&B World Magazine – the country's only foodservice magazine.

The Caltex LPG "Sulit sa Bilis Serbisyo" Award for the Lipton Mocktail Mixing Competition Contestant who will post the highest score in flaring will receive two cellular phones worth twenty thousand pesos for himself and his coach.

Watch the National Culinary Showdown that will showcase the country's top collegiate culinary teams from Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao and NCR as they battle it out in the country's grandest race for taste!

Great door prizes await lucky spectators!
Admission is FREE!
Tuesday / February 22, 2005
Philippine Trade & Training Center
Roxas Blvd. cor Gil Puyat Avenue
Pasay City

Unilever



Seminar on food business

MB&G/PROACTIVE will hold the Managing a Restaurant/Canteen Seminar-Workshop 1-5 p.m., March 2-10 (excluding weekends), at Eastwood City, Libis, Quezon City.

The seminar is open to restaurateurs, hoteliers, resort and canteen operators and those planning to open their own food service business.

Reservations are on a first-come-first-served basis. Call PACT at 6871787 or 0915-4315375. Seminar fee is P5,000 per participant inclusive of manual and handouts, snacks, certificate of completion and workshop materials and equipment.

Organic cooking class Feb.22-24

EVA Rose Pua, owner of Delifresh Organic Restaurant, offers a three-day organic cooking class Feb. 22-24.

Delifresh Organic Restaurant is at Carpark Building, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Edsa corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City. The three-day cooking course will teach healthy ways of food preparation and cooking. It will also teach the healthy eating practices and how to combine foods to maintain a desired weight.

Deli Fresh Restaurant is "certified organic." That means its fresh organic produce has met strict standards from the seed through growing, harvesting and distribution.

Each organic farm is inspected to ensure only approved organic methods are used. Call 6388388.

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no, not to sunbathe

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See posters for details. Promo until Feb. 28, 2005.
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0374, Series of 2005.

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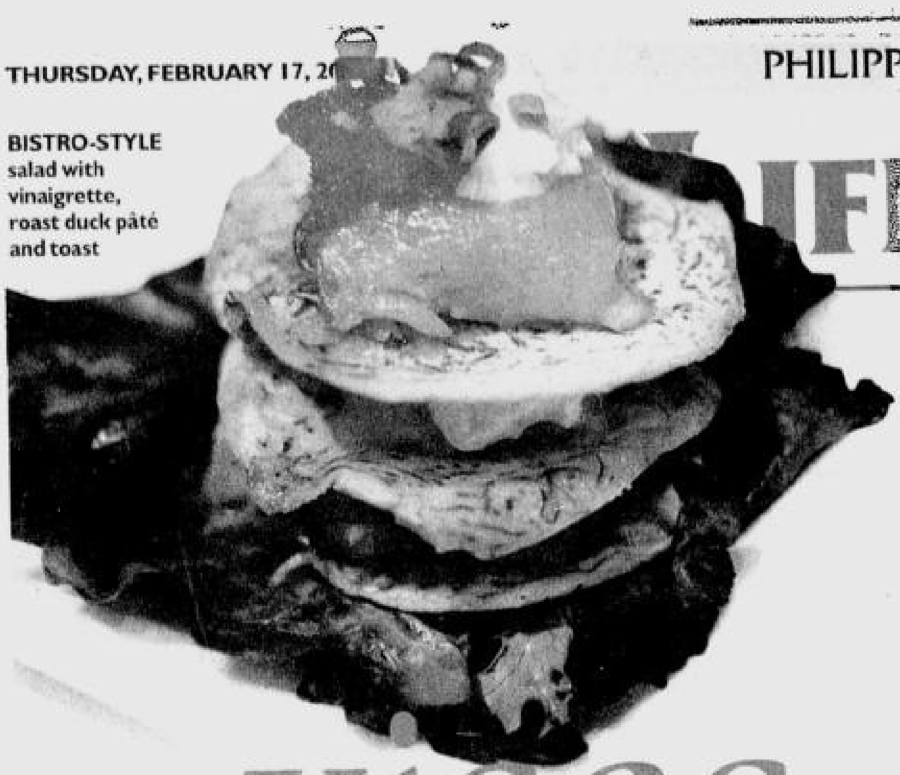
Inquirer life name/city/message to
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)



BISTRO-STYLE salad with vinaigrette, roast duck pâté and toast

No visas required

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Joseph Agcaoili and Rudy Esperas

EMBASSY, the newest restaurant to open at the Fort, aims to provide foodies multiple dishes and unlimited entry to three dining options: an "upscale but casual" restaurant, a newly opened Super Club with private rooms inspired by the House of Blue Leaves in the movie "Kill Bill," and a soon-to-open cafeteria serving chef Fernando Aracama's idea of comfort food.

The restaurant is open daily and serves lunch from 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m., and dinner from 6:30-11 p.m. Late-night patrons are treated to downtempo music on certain days, as the place, especially the restaurant's cozy mezzanine with its Philippe Starck chairs, transforms into a lounge

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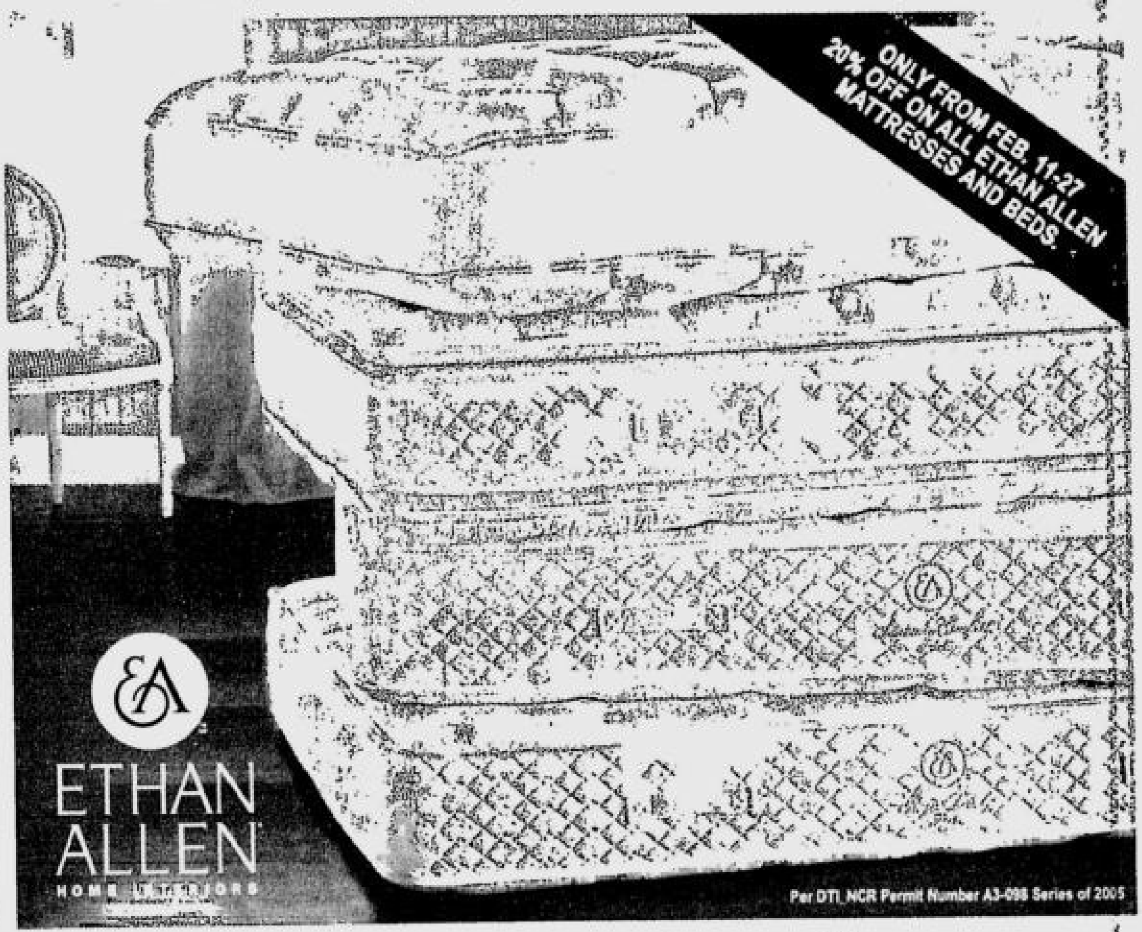

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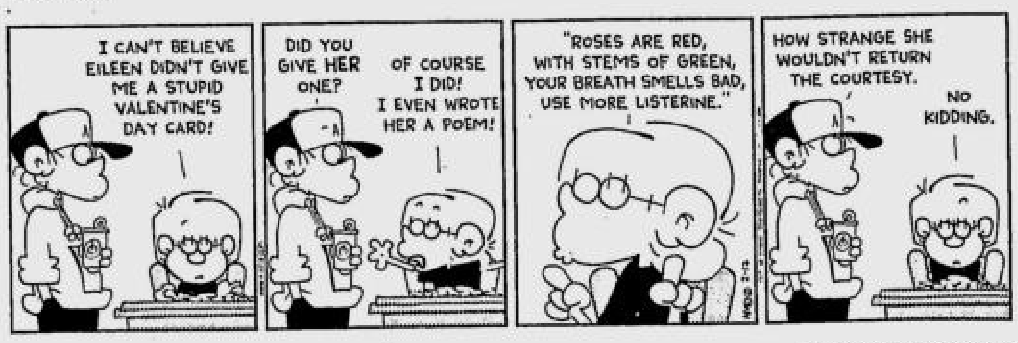
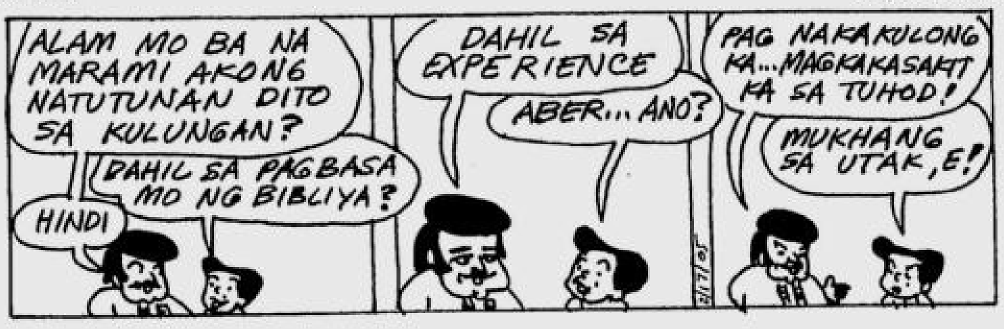
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2005

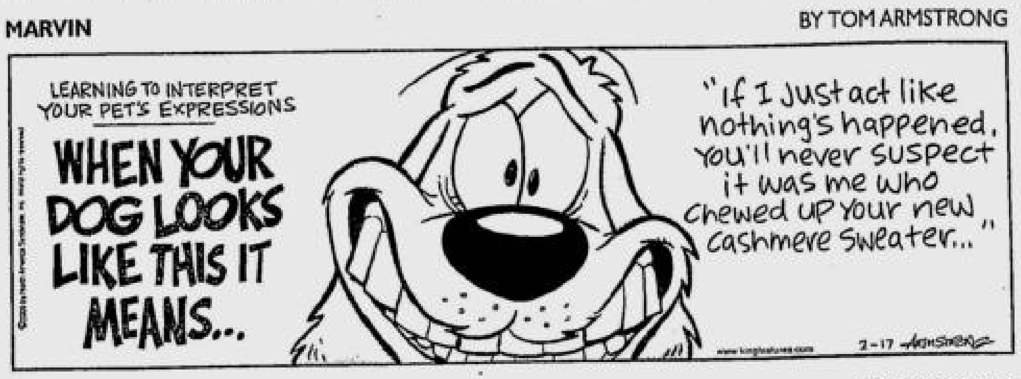
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


I CAN'T BELIEVE EILEEN DIDN'T GIVE ME A STUPID VALENTINE'S DAY CARD!
DID YOU GIVE HER ONE?
OF COURSE I DID! I EVEN WROTE HER A POEM!
"ROSES ARE RED, WITH STEMS OF GREEN, YOUR BREATH SMELLS BAD, USE MORE LISTERINE."
HOW STRANGE SHE WOULDN'T RETURN THE COURTESY.
NO KIDDING.

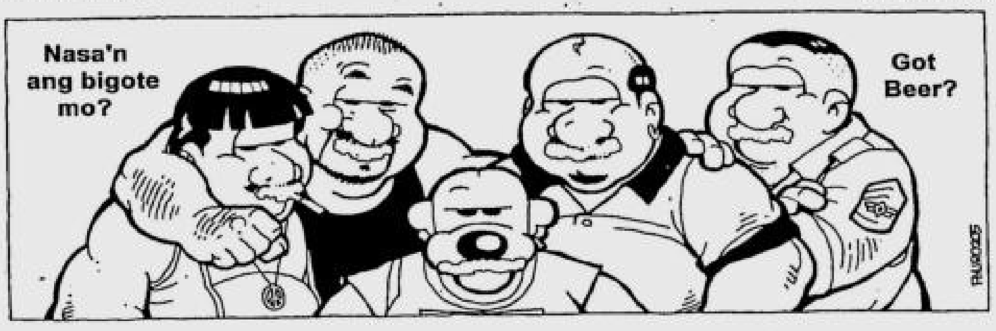
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


ALAM MO BA NA MARAMI AKONG NATUTUNAN DITO SA KULUNGAN?
DAHIL SA PAGBASA MO NG BIBLIYA?
HINDI
DAHIL SA EXPERIENCE
ABER... ANO?
PAG NAKAKULONG KA...MAGKAKASAKIT KA SA TUHOD!
MUKHANG SA UTAK, E!
2/17/05

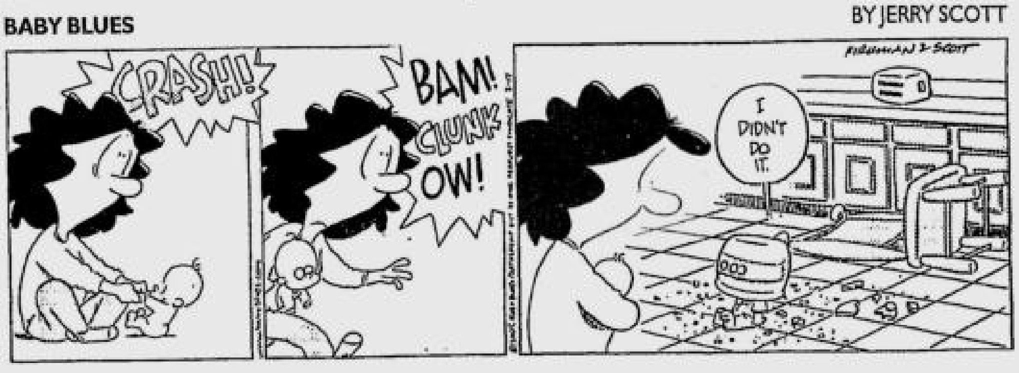
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


LEARNING TO INTERPRET YOUR PET'S EXPRESSIONS
WHEN YOUR DOG LOOKS LIKE THIS IT MEANS...
"If I just act like nothing's happened, you'll never suspect it was me who chewed up your new cashmere sweater..."
2-17 ARMSTRONG

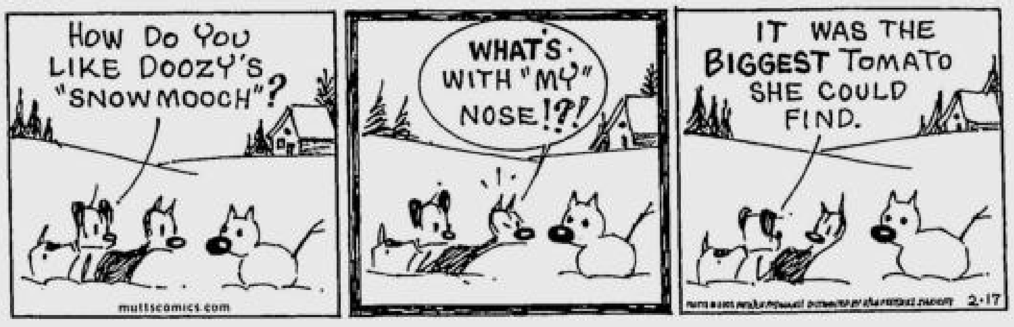
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


Nasa'n ang bigote mo?
Got Beer?

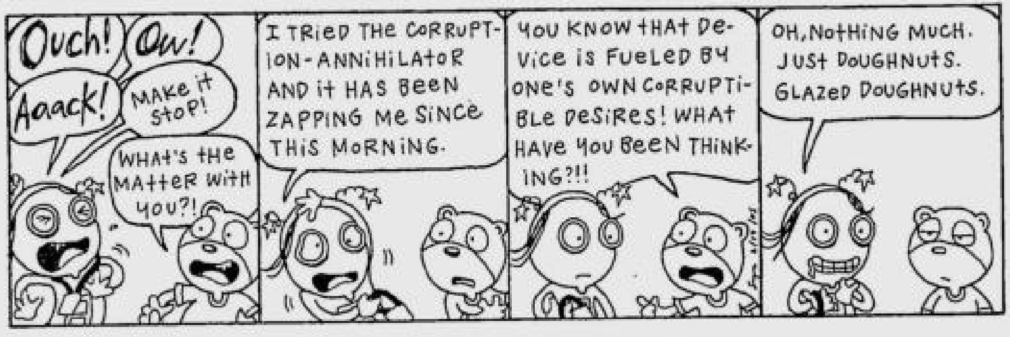
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


CRASH!
BAM! CLUNK OW!
I DIDN'T DO IT.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

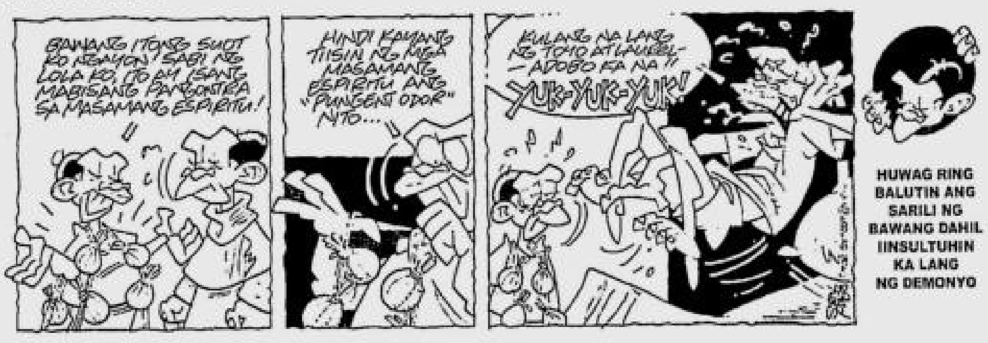
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


HOW DO YOU LIKE DOOZY'S "SNOWMOOCH"?
WHAT'S WITH "MY" NOSE!?!
IT WAS THE BIGGEST TOMATO SHE COULD FIND.
muttscomics.com
2-17

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Ouch!
Ow!
Aaack!
Make it stop!
What's the matter with you?!
I tried the corruption-annihilator and it has been zapping me since this morning.
You know that device is fueled by one's own corruptible desires! What have you been thinking?!!
Oh, nothing much. Just doughnuts. Glazed doughnuts.

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


BAWANG ITONG SUOT KO NGAYON! SABI NG LOLA KO, ITO AY ISANG MABISANG PANGONTRA SA MASAMANG ESPIRITU!
HINDI KAYANG TIISIN NG MGA MASAMANG ESPIRITU ANG "PUNGENT ODOR" NITO...
KULANG NA LANG NG TOYO AT LAUREL—ADOBO KA NA!!
YUK-YUK-YUK!

HUWAG RING BALUTIN ANG SARILI NG BAWANG DAHIL IINSULTUHIN KA LANG NG DEMONYO

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Most people—especially your family—love you (that's sometimes a lot to handle). You're patient, sensitive and conscientious. You have an eye for artistic beauty. Your easygoing, supportive nature makes you a favorite among others. Essentially, you like people. The year ahead is one of the best years you've had in more than a decade.

Birthdate of: Jerry O'Connell, actor; Denise Richards, actress; Alan Bates, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a wonderful day to talk to others. Good feelings abound! You feel generous in spirit and generous in your pocketbook. (Buy a treat for a loved one.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is the day to talk to your boss to promote your best interests. Things are going so well for you that even others notice. Life is good!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a great day to begin a vacation or travel somewhere for pleasure. You also feel very generous toward those who are less fortunate in distant places.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is a fabulous day to do fund raising. It's also a wonderful day to get a loan or a mortgage. Nobody can refuse you anything! It's as if the world owes you a favor today.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is the perfect day to patch up problematic relationships. You feel good about others; they feel good about you. It's a mutual admiration society.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Wonderful news related to your job will please you today. Co-workers are extraordinarily helpful. A hot tip from someone could improve your status.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is a wonderful day for romance and love. You might fall in love. Artists can sell their work. Teachers are successful working with children. Athletes can negotiate good deals.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is a wonderful day to enjoy discussions with family members. Invite family over. Put on a great spread. Feelings of bounty and wealth arise easily now.

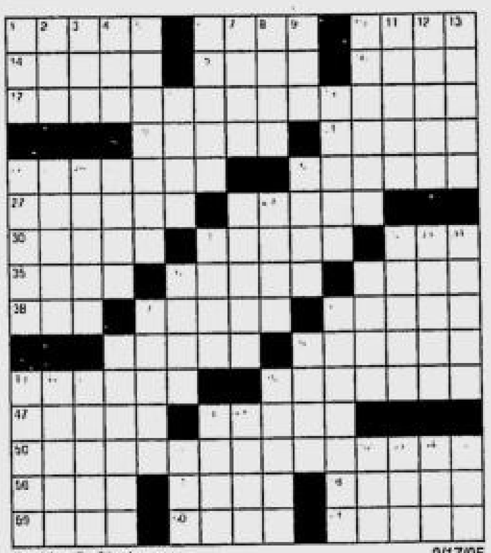
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Short trips will please you today. You might also meet people who are upbeat, high-spirited, caring and kind. In fact, you're touched by the generosity of others.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is a moneymaking day! It's an excellent time for all business and commerce. You can boost your earnings. You can also buy some beautiful things for yourself and loved ones.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You're a humanitarian. You believe in the greatest good for the greatest number. Today you want to put this into action. "Be the change you want to see in the world."

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Help from behind the scenes either can promote your education and training or will allow you to travel somewhere. Accept whatever comes your way graciously.

DAILY CROSSWORD

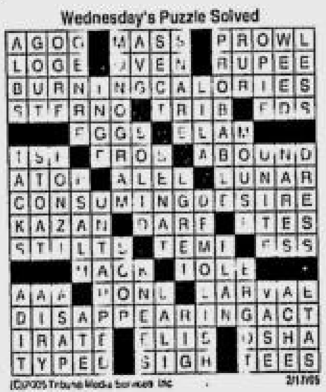


By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
2/17/05

ACROSS
1 Edible tubers
6 Fed
10 "The Joy of Cooking" author Rombauer
14 Not moving
15 Field event
16 "Hud" Oscar winner
17 Start of Danny Kaye quote
20 Wish granter
21 Confiscate
22 Very angry
26 Loose-leaf book
27 Part 2 of quote
28 Great brilliance
30 South American range
31 Perm milieu
32 Santa's toymaker
35 Recolors
36 Part 3 of quote
37 Jack of talk shows
38 Forlorn
39 Acknowledge
40 Book div.
41 Goads
42 Part 4 of quote
43 Come to fruition
46 Splatters
47 Once more
48 Fully grown
50 End of quote
56 Coup d'__
57 Miami pros
58 Missouri River feeder
59 Cincinnati nine
60 Hooters
61 Mr. Moneybags

DOWN
1 "Shop _ You Drop"
2 Singer DiFranco
3 Gridiron zebra
4 Mine find
5 Marks of disgrace
6 Stately
7 Wise men
8 Farm measurement
9 Maiden name indication
10 Meaning
11 Change an offer
12 Indian corn
13 Author of "Ragged Dick"
18 Understands
19 Man from Japan
22 Lots and lots
23 Singer Tucker
24 Concluded
25 Farewells
26 Play the trumpet
28 Works for
29 Coagulate
31 Clupeid fish
32 Potting soil
33 Carpentry machine
34 Fast food order
36 Fox chaser?
37 Cronies
39 Infantryman
40 Infantrymen
41 Specific locations
42 Confederate
43 Printer stack
44 Playing marble
45 Mythical water nymph
46 Strokes on the green
48 In a frosh way
49 Pushbutton forerunner
51 So it's you!
52 Dos Passos opus
53 Hack
54 Earlier
55 Bird's beak

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved



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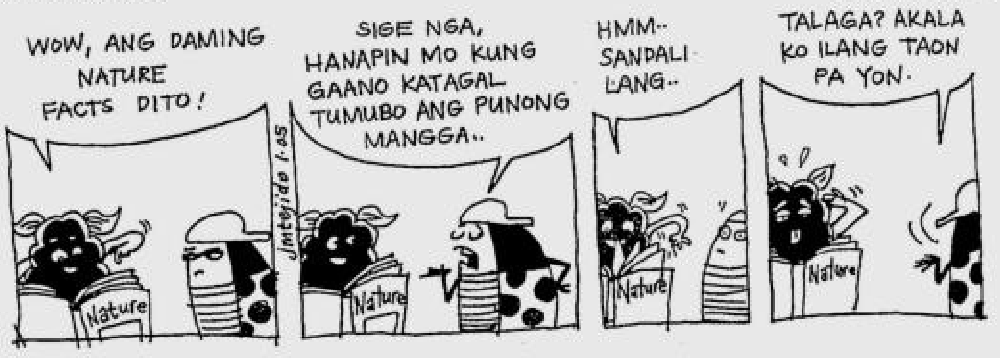
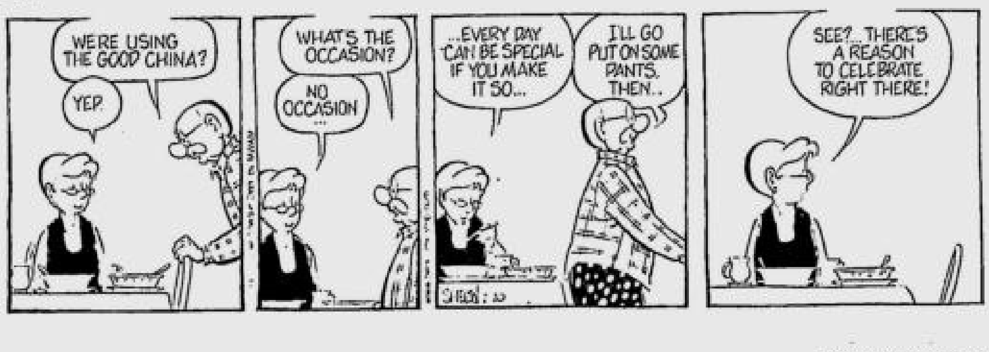
2/17/05

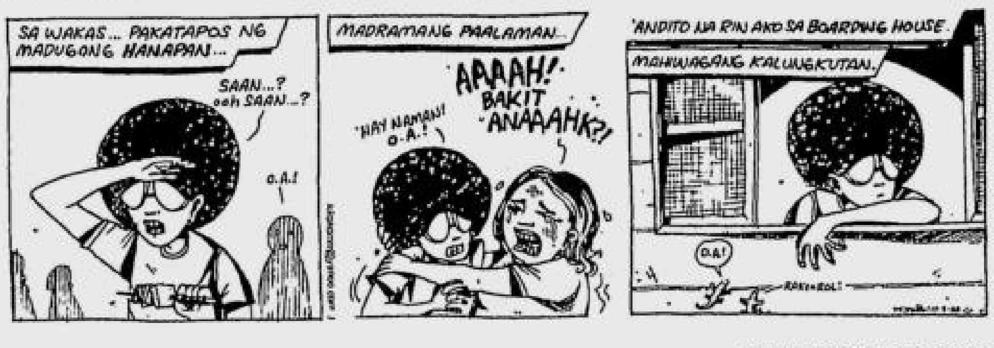
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


WOW, ANG DAMING NATURE FACTS DITO!
SIGE NGA, HANAPIN MO KUNG GAANO KATAGAL TUMUBO ANG PUNONG MANGGA..
HMM.. SANDALI LANG..
TALAGA? AKALA KO ILANG TAON PA YON.
Nature

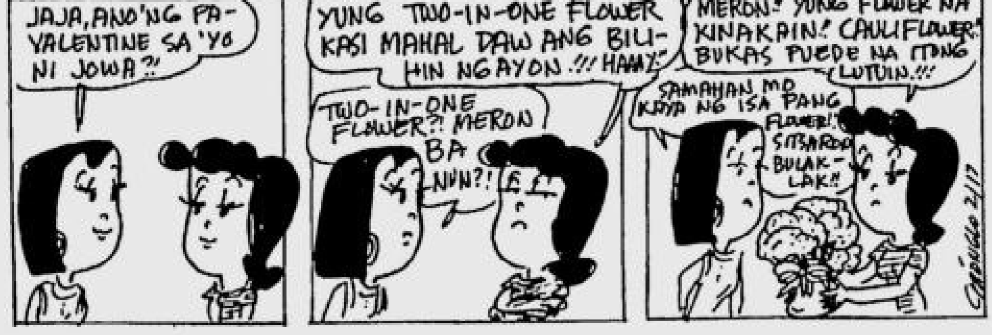
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


WE'RE USING THE GOOD CHINA?
YEP.
WHAT'S THE OCCASION?
NO OCCASION...
...EVERY DAY CAN BE SPECIAL IF YOU MAKE IT SO...
I'LL GO PUT ON SOME PANTS, THEN..
SEE?... THERE'S A REASON TO CELEBRATE RIGHT THERE!

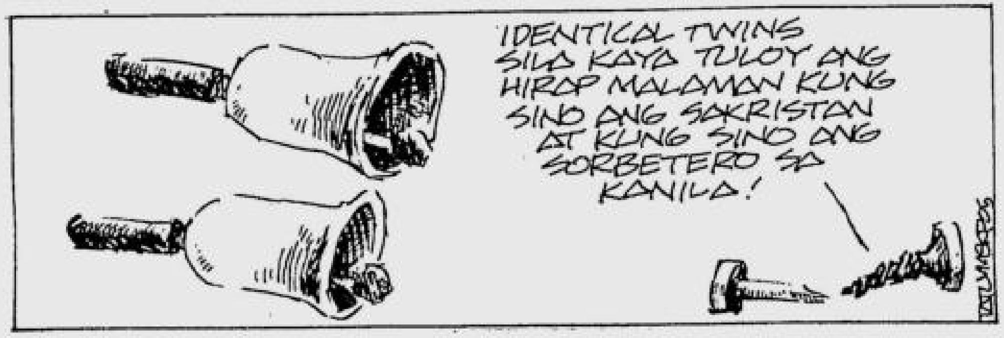
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA

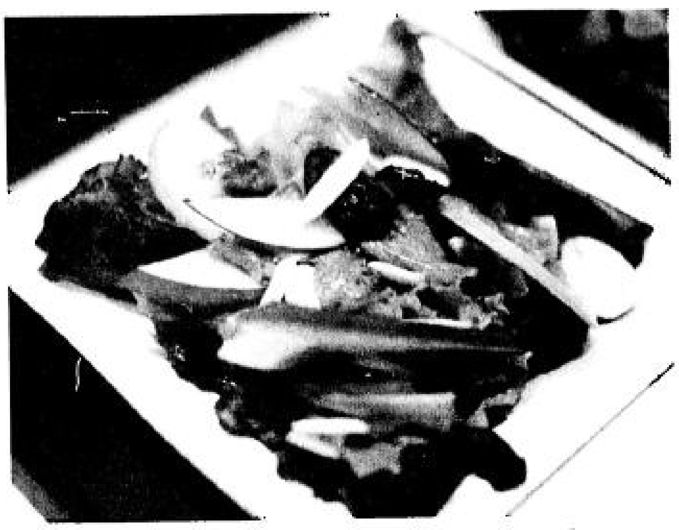

SA WAKAS... PAKATAPOS NG MADUGONG HANAPAN...
SAAN...? ooh SAAN...?
O.A.!
MADRAMANG PAALAMAN...
AAAAH! BAKIT ANAAAHK?!
HAY NAMAN! O.A.!
ANDITO NA RIN AKO SA BOARDING HOUSE.
MAHIWAGANG KALUNGKUTAN.
O.A.!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

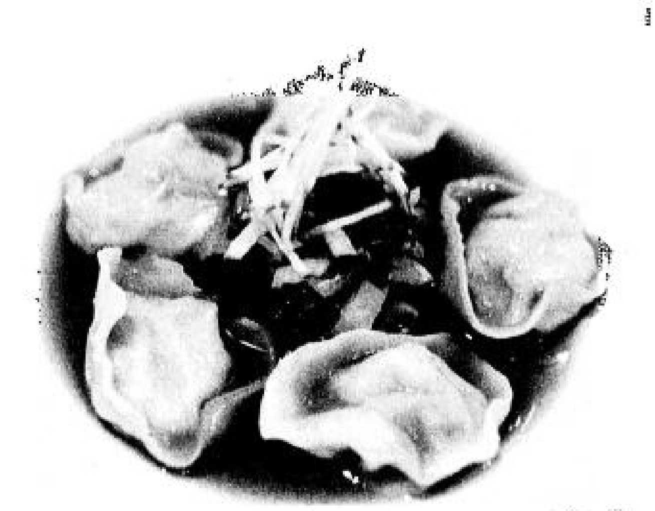

JAJA, ANO'NG PA-VALENTINE SA 'YO NI JOWA?!
YUNG TWO-IN-ONE FLOWER KASI MAHAL DAW ANG BILIHIN NGAYON!!! HAAY!
TWO-IN-ONE FLOWER?! MERON BA NUN?!
MERON! YUNG FLWER NA KINAKAIN! CAULIFLOWER! BUKAS PUEDE NA ITONG LUTUIN!!!
SAMAHAN MO KAYA NG ISA PANG FLOWER! SITSARO BULAKLAK!!
CHIONGLO 2/17

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


IDENTICAL TWINS SILA KAYA TULOY ANG HIROP MALAMAN KUNG SINO ANG SAKRISTAN AT KUNG SINO ANG SORBETERO SA KANILA!



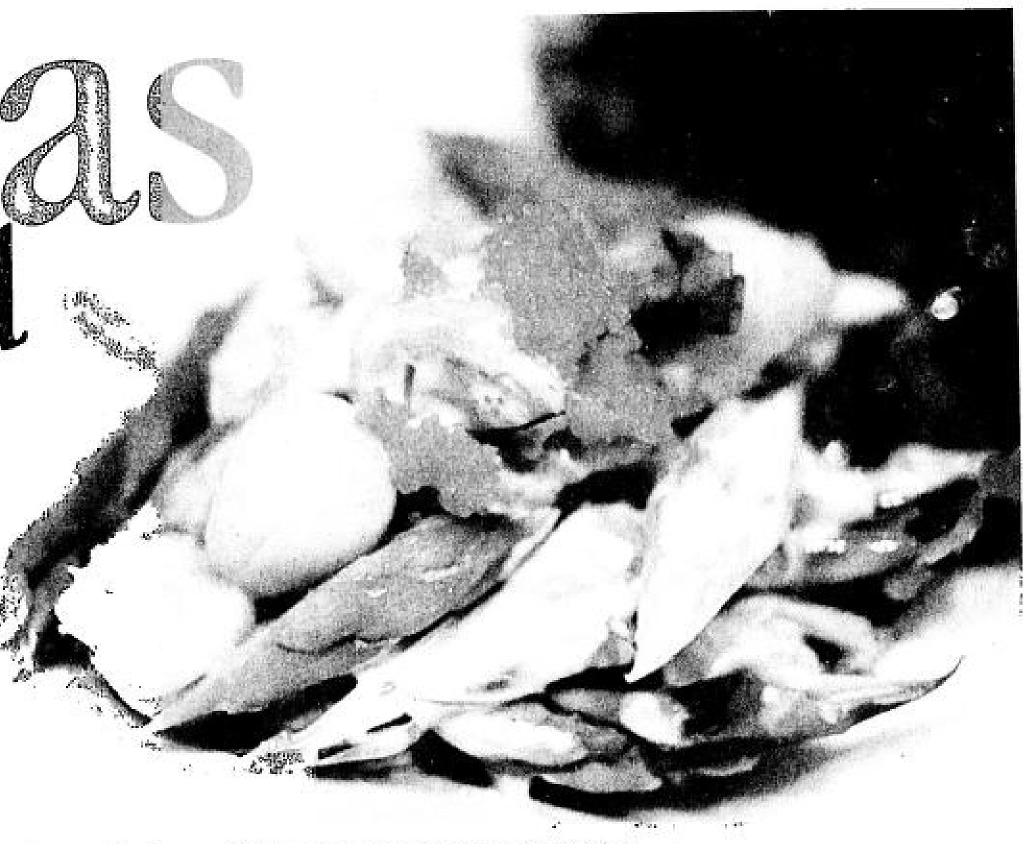
SALAD of apples, celery, sun-dried cranberries and almonds with field greens



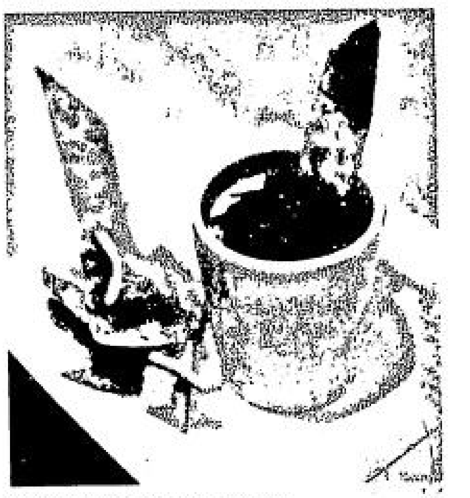
KAFFIR-SCENTED miso soup with foie gras tortellini, shiitake and baby bokchoy

PAN-ROASTED chicken fillet on crispy potato croutons, pickled beets and mustard vinaigrette

No visas required



CITRUS gravlax on crispy taro gaufrettes, wasabi sour cream and red caviar



TOMATO bisque soup taster

From page D1

during the wee hours.

All three establishments have separate entrances.

Cool venue

It didn't hurt that behind the coolest venue in Metro Manila these days, aside from Aracama of Uva fame, are businessman and part-time interior designer Eric Cua, Jon Herrera and the indefatigable and multifaceted Tim Yap, who again went beyond "protocol" and thought of using the name Embassy.

"We want to the take the scene to a different level," says Yap, INQUIRER 2bU! columnist and creative director of INQUIRER Super. "As 'immigration officers,' we want to provide people with a whole new experience where they deserve multiple entry."

For his part, Aracama chose to derive inspiration from French and Japanese cuisine to come up with a new set of dishes that he says is different yet pleasing enough to the Filipino palate. He had to wait, however, for Cua and his team to finish work on the main restaurant's dark and ultra-modern interiors for the inspiration to kick in.

"French and Japanese cuisine have certain similarities," he says. "French has a very traditional and forthright quality to it that's very bistro. And so has Japanese cuisine. You come out feeling satisfied, but not feeling guilty."

It was but natural for Aracama to draw ideas from both cuisine. After all, he trained in the United States at the New England Culinary Institute in Vermont under French chefs. During that time, he traveled regularly to France to imbibe its legendary culinary scene. He even had a stint at an obscure countryside restaurant in Spain before returning to the US.

Upon his return, he found himself working at a Japanese restaurant for three years.

"That marked my introduction to Japanese culture," he says.

Affordable offerings

The temptation to do pretty plates was quite strong since French and Japanese cuisine are also known for their aesthetic qualities. Aracama, however, had to restrain himself in order to make his offerings look more affordable to most diners. Embassy's dishes, he insists, provide patrons good value for money.

"I don't want to intimidate people," he says, "I've learned that from my experience at Uva. If the plate is too beautiful, it connotes a high price. Besides, if I can work within the parameters of my costing and still have enough room to express my creativity, then why should I levy that on clients? Of course, I want them to come back."

Among the house specialties are fusion dishes such as blackened Chilean sea bass on seaweed risotto and soy-mirin glaze (P690 per plate) and seared lapu-lapu on sesame beurre noisette with sun-dried cranberry-caper relish (P420).

The chef also came up with his own take on such bistro classics as pan-roasted chicken fillet on crispy potato croutons, pickled beets and mustard vinaigrette (P285), lamb shank braised with dried fruit on roasted vegetables and couscous with orange (P455) and chicken en papillote on sautéed mushrooms, leeks and white truffle oil (P299).

Japanese influences are quite evident in such offerings as the grilled salmon with citrus teriyaki glaze on cold soba noodle salad with wasabi dressing (P385), pan-fried salmon on basil-flavored mashed potato and silky prawn nage (P395) and kaffir-scented miso soup with foie gras tortellini, shiitake and baby bokchoy (P495).

For hearty meat lovers, the chef also offers US prime rib-eye steak with gorgonzola shallot butter, green bean and tomato salad (P997). He plans to beef up Embassy's steak dishes to give meat-eating Filipinos more options.

In the meantime, diners have a number of foie gras (duck liver) dishes to choose from.

Small plates

Speaking of options, diners who want to sample as many dishes as possible degustation-style can do so at Embassy, as Aracama offers quite a list of small plates of various appetizers, salad dishes and soup tasters. A number of offerings are good enough for two people.

Among the more popular ones are roasted red and yellow bell peppers marinated in olive oil and raw garlic (P110 per plate), citrus gravlax on crispy taro gaufrettes, wasabi sour cream and red caviar (P125), scallop and shrimp salad in a creamy kaffir lime-tobiko roe dressing (P115), deep-fried silken tofu with sake brood and drizzled with truffle oil (P140), and seared foie gras (again!) and radish sandwich with hijiki seaweed (P245).

Aracama's salad offerings—from raspberry dressed baby greens with seared foie gras to lemon miso dressing and smoked fish tartare crostini—are quite exotic in themselves. The bistro-style salad with vinaigrette, roast duck pâté and toast happens to be the chef's favorite.

For the less adventurous, however, there's the trusty Embassy Caesar salad with roast garlic dressing and anchovy toast. Aracama's three partners were quite adamant that this ubiquitous variant be included in the list, knowing how popular it is among Filipinos. What was a poor chef to do when he was clearly outnumbered?

"The small-plate concept sets us apart from some restaurants," he says. "These small plates are for more adventurous diners who want to sample as many dishes as possible. They can order the whole lot if they want, but I'm pretty sure they'll be satiated by the sixth."

And should they exceed the day's calorie count, they can burn a few extra calories by staying up all night next door at the Super Club. There are no long lines—at least not yet—leading to any of the establishments and almost nobody is denied entrance at this Embassy.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

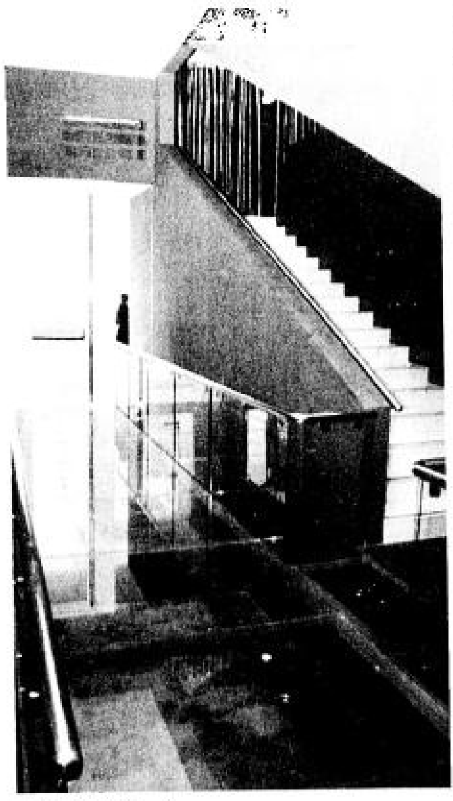
Embassy's multiple-entry resto design takes dining, clubbing and plain chilling to a new level

CREAMY mushroom soup taster

LAMB shank braised with dried fruit on roasted vegetable,

BROWN sugar pineapple pudding

CHAWAN mushi with miso marinated foie gras, white truffle oil and fried silken tofu



ALL-GLASS walkway

SECOND-FLOOR lounge

"IMMIGRATION officers" Eric Cua, chef Fernando Aracama, Tim Yap and Jon Herrera

EMBASSY'S main dining area

A practical cook's recipe for a multimedia company

TEACHING techniques–not recipes–is the principle that guides Nancy Reyes-Lumen, editor in chief of Cook Magazine and host of "The Practical Cook" television show that airs at 9 a.m. Sundays over ABC-5.

She knows that, whether the economy is good or bad, people have to eat and, food is considered a fun part of life.

Lumen has turned "The Practical Cook" and Cook Magazine into an integrated undertaking as Cook Multimedia Company. She believes there is a market of foodies and the most effective way to reach that sector is through multimedia: radio, TV, print, and web, in that order.

Believing in the power of TV as a communication medium, she has used the medium to share her vast knowledge in food and cooking.

Lumen initially learned the techniques of cooking from her grandmother, Engracia C. Reyes, better known as Aling Asiang, founder of Aristocrat Restaurant. She learned from her *lola* valuable kitchen techniques.

Lumen describes herself as a practical cook who loves gathering recipes and cooking techniques from kitchen artisans and older generations of foodies.

On television, she frequently whipped up dishes in "Home Sweet House" hosted by Ali Sotto. She also appeared with her chef-son, Joey Herrera, in the cooking segment of Ricky Reyes' "Beauty School Plus."

Then, with Manny Benedicto, Lumen produced "Cooking Dot Com," the cooking *cum* comedy show which she and Arnel Ignacio co-hosted. Now she has her own cooking show, "The Practical Cook," with Roden Araneta as co-host, Grant Lee as director and Freddy Soler as executive producer.

She was also a guest in a recent feature of "Jessica Soho Reports" on exotic food.

Lumen says she wants to spread the knowledge and appreciation of food–all the aspects of it, especially Filipino food–to all classes, especially the middle class. She wants people to know cooking has to be fun and not intimidating. Thus, she often teaches a simple way to do a complicated-sounding dish.

She stresses that the thrust of her multimedia company is to make cooking interesting in both TV and print. She believes she will be able to sustain audience interest in all media.

Lumen points out that food is a wide-ranging topic. There will never be a shortage of stories. The challenge, she says, is how the multimedia company can sustain the audience's attention and how effectively. She says, by going multimedia, they hope to achieve fast and wide exposure.

Cook Multimedia Company operates under the office of Cook Magazine but has its own separate group of officers. Heading the list of people behind the company are Anthony Cabangon and Lumen, both of Cook Magazine.

The company will source ads for both the TV show and magazine through its integrated staff, talents and skills. It will also endorse what it thinks are worthy products and services.

The multimedia company's long-term plan is to produce a volume of books related to food and cooking and as an added medium to the TV show. This will allow Cook Multimedia Company to reach out to the foodies who are overseas Filipino workers longing for a good, sound TV show they can relate to.

HOST Nancy Reyes-Lumen and resource persons Pascal Gaujon and Odille de France Malay during the French cuisine feature in "The Practical Cook", 9 a.m., ABC-5, Sunday.

Zen-inspired resto is latest addition to Metrowalk Complex

AT THE PHI RestoBar's opening are Monnette and Franz Co, event host Rhianna Roque, Phi Bar's general manager Portia Dominguez, bar directors Achit Kaw and Pasig City Councilor Atoy Co and Carl Kaw.

PHI RestoBar was formally opened recently at the Metrowalk complex in Ortigas Center with some 500 guests in attendance.

Key officials and the restaurant investors, led by Achit Kaw and Pasig City Councilor Atoy Co, welcomed guests. Pasig City Mayor Vicente "Enteng" Eusebio was guest of honor for the blessing and ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The evening's highlights were tarot card readings, exciting raffles and games with special prizes courtesy of Mild Seven and Diageo.

Occupying 490 square meters and accommodating more than 300 people, the two-story Phi RestoBar features Zen-inspired architecture.

Hosted by Rhiana Roque, the celebration featured the Dream Sequence band and Route 70.

Its modern Filipino cuisine uses the best selection of fresh produce. Specialties of the house include the Beef *Lauya*, *Tinapa* Rice, Chicken Satay, Hainanese Chicken. Phi also offers a selection of uniquely concocted hot and cold beverages, and cocktails.

Phi is a multi-purpose and multi-function venue suitable for meetings, press conferences, launches, concerts and others. Call 6872758 or 6874685.

Burger challenge begins

ENTRIES in the 2005 Quadzilla Burger Challenge at Flamers Burgers and Chicken (Greenbelt 1) are now being accepted.

Participants will challenge last year's Quadzilla eating champion, Erwin Kho, a 25-year-old medical student from the University of Santo Tomas.

Contestants will have to finish a Quadzilla—100 grams of French fries made from real Idaho potatoes and a 20-ounce soft drink of their choice in the fastest possible time.

Last year, Kho received a cash prize, and Flamers gift certificates. Flamers' hamburgers, with a 19 percent fat content, are made from lean grass-fed cattle from Australia and New Zealand and charbroiled over hot volcanic rocks according to the customer's preference.

Call 7507619 for details or dial 459-FOOD for delivery.

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Glorietta Activity Center
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Glorietta - 752-7272,
Greenbelt - 757-4853

ALABANG TOWN CENTER
Feb 25-27, 11AM, 3PM, 6PM
Activity Center
Customer Service Hotline:
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March 4&5, 11AM, 4:30PM, 7PM
March 6, 11AM, 3:30PM, 6:30PM
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Get a chance to meet and greet them!
Feb 22, 5PM at Glorietta 2 lobby
Feb 28, 4PM & 6PM at ATC Cinema Lobby

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